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T H E 1-4

D I V I N E

Institution, Order and Government,

O F

AVISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST,

ACCORDING TO

The Direction left by Him in the New Testament,

ASSERTED, EXPLAINED, AND VINDICATED.

By J O H N W I L L I A M S,

Late MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

Ezek. xliii. 11. *If they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the Form of the House, and the Fashion thereof, &c.*

1 Tim. iii. 15. *That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth.*

L O N D O N :

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D. V. M. E.

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*To all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity
and Truth.*

Dearly Beloved,

THE Love of God, which hath been shed abroad in your Hearts by the Holy Ghost, through the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, in dying for you, to redeem you from all Iniquity, and bring you nigh to God by his Blood, I hope does fill your Souls with an earnest Desire of being found fully walking in all the Ways of his Appointments in his House, which is the Place where his Honour dwells, and where he records his Name, and where he will come and bless you. And that you may the better be enabled thereunto, it is highly necessary to know the Nature of the House, as to the Matter and Form, the Comings in and the Goings out thereof, and what ought to be your Behaviour and Deportment therein.

Ignorance and Indifferency on the one Hand, and Pride and Selfishness on the other, have been the great Reason of the Calamities that have befallen the Churches of Christ. Hence has come the Dishonour of Christ in the World; hence the Want of Love among the Saints, and the Decay of Purity and Holiness. And to that Height it is arrived, that even some of those Churches that seem to be most separate from the World and Antichristian Worship in the Administration of Ordinances, are too much departed from the Purity of God's Worship, and from the Order of his House; who instead of observing all that the Head of the Church hath commanded, have modelled the Churches to their own carnal Fancy and worldly Interest; from whence has proceeded the unfaithful Admission of Members into the Church, (especially if they be rich) and the little inquiring after their growing in Faith, and the Knowledge of Christ Jesus. Hence

the strolling of Officers of Churches from one Flock to another (to do good they say) with many other little unworthy Practices.

These things, Dearly Beloved, with many others too many to be enumerated in this Place, are the Grief of many sincere Christians, whose Desire it is that God would give the Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge of himself, and the Way of his House, so that the Breaches may be repaired: and the House of the Lord cleansed, and restored to that Beauty and Splendor as become it, that those who are without may see the Excellency of the Ways of the Lord, that they may have a Desire of a Place and a Name therein, and dwell in the House of the Lord all their Days, and inquire in his Temple; when on the contrary the Selfishness and Worldliness of those that should be Watchmen therein, like the Sons of *Eli*, have made many to abhor the Ordinances of the Lord, 1 *Sam.* ii. 12—17.

Therefore it concerns you all, that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to be zealous and active for his Glory, and to stir up one another to this Work, as *Nehemiah* in *Chap.* ii. 17. And if those that should go before you in it, refuse, saying, It is not Time, do you put your Shoulders to the Work, the Lord will be with you, for his Name is concerned. And lest any should say, We understand not the Way and Order of it, I may say the Lord hath stirred up the Spirit of this Servant of his, the Author now in Glory, plainly to lay down the Nature and Order of God's House, with a solid Confirmation of it deduced from plain Texts of Scripture, and a Vindication of it from the Opposition made against it, with practical Improvements of it, fitted to the meanest Capacity of every one that desires to be found in the Ways of the Lord, by which it seems to be the Mind of God that the least in his House might be left without Excuse.

And therefore I heartily commend it to the Consideration of every sincere-hearted Christian, as very instructive and teaching; and as exact, according to the Pattern laid down in Scripture, as any Book of this Kind I have met with, the Author appearing to have a more than ordinary Guidance of the Spirit of God in the penning of it. I am your's in the Lord,

J. NOBLE.

P R E F A C E.

THE Design of the ensuing Discourse is to discover the Nature of an instituted Church of Christ, in respect both of Matter and Form, wherein you have the several Branches of Church-Government distinctly handled, shewing the Laws, Forms and Ordinances of the House of God, with the going in and going out thereof, that every Thing may be done according to Rule, and nothing merely human maintained therein.

There is no part of the Temple, or Temple-worship, or Discipline, but what the measuring Line of the Word should be drawn over; Rev. xi. 1. And there was given me a Reed like to a Rod; and the Angel said, Arise, and measure the Temple of God, and the Altar, and them that worship therein. There is no Temple under the new Dispensation, but an instituted Church, nor any Reed or Rod to measure it withal; but the Reed of the Word. When John had a Vision of the holy Jerusalem, he observed that the Wall of the City had twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apostles. The Foundation, the Groundwork of it was Apostolical: So must the Foundation of an instituted Church be. And when the City was measured, the Length, and the Breadth, and the Height of it were equal, twelve thousand Furlongs. Here again, the Root of the Number is twelve, whether you take the Measure of the Height, or the Breadth, or the Length; And he measured the Wall thereof, a hundred and forty four Cubits. The Root is in twelve, and the Multiplication is by twelve; twelve Times twelve make a Hundred forty and four. Every Thing appertaining to this Holy City must be Apostolical as to the Foundation, and also to the Superstructure.

1. If we take a View of the Worship of God, we find that every Branch of that hath the Stamp of Divine Authority upon it. The Ordinances that are to be administered in an instituted Church are of Christ's own Appointment, to be proved either by express Precept, or by Apostolical Precedent. It was Christ that ordained Baptism to be administered to Disciples, as a regular Prequalification to Church-membership, Mat. xxviii, 19. He it is that ordained Prayer to be made in his Name,

the Gospel to be preached, the Supper to be administered; and gave his Apostles a Charge to teach baptized Disciples, to observe all Things whatsoever he had commanded them: And accordingly the Church being taught by the Apostles, kept close to his Appointment. They continued in the Apostle's Doctrine, and Fellowship, and breaking of Bread, and Prayer, Acts ii. 42. Jesus Christ did never intrust any Man or Men to appoint in Matter of Worship, under the former Dispensation. Moses was the principal Man that was employed, but he was not entrusted with any Power to do, or to appoint to be done, in Matter of Worship. When he was about to build the Tabernacle, he was admonished of God to see that all Things might be done according to the Pattern that was shewed to him in the Mount, Heb. viii. 5. There must not be a Loop, nor a Pin, nor a Thread of a different Colour from the Pattern; and when he looked upon all the Work, it was done as the Lord commanded, Exod. xxxix. 43. Moses did not give Rules of his own, but still declared what the Lord had said, what he had appointed to be done in Matter of Worship.

Under the New Testament the Apostles themselves had no Power to appoint in Matters of Worship, they had Instructions from Christ for what they did. Acts i. 3. Christ was seen of them forty Days after his Resurrection, speaking to them of the Things appertaining to the Kingdom of God: And when he had given them full Instructions, he gave them their full Commission, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. And strictly enjoined them to teach the Observation of all Things whatsoever he had commanded them: which Commands of his we may read in Apostolical Precedents.

2. Christ hath appointed Officers in his Church, ordinary and extraordinary: Such as were extraordinary were Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists. These were to continue for a Season, these had extraordinary Gifts, which, together with their Offices, are now ceased. Officers that are to continue in the Church, are Bishops and Deacons, or Elders and Deacons (and Deaconesses, where the Case requires it) And we may not make any other Officers than these, because it would reflect on Christ himself, either on his Wisdom or his Faithfulness. On his Wisdom, as if he did not know what Officers his Church would need, when Apostles and Evangelists were ceased: Or upon his Faithfulness, if he knew that he did not appoint them. And yet

yet he was said to be faithful in the House of God, as a Son. We never saw much Fruit of those Trees that have been planted in Office-power in the Church, that were never planted there by Divine Appointment. We have no more Power to appoint new Officers than we have to appoint new Ordinances in the Church.

3. Jesus Christ hath given out Laws for the Government of his Church: he was with the Apostles (as I said before) forty Days after his Resurrection, speaking with them about the Things appertaining to the Kingdom of God, how this Kingdom must be ordered and governed, and then commanded them to teach the Observation of all Things whatsoever he had commanded them. Now the Apostles have accordingly declared to the Churches how they ought to rule and govern, how to proceed in Cases of Offence; what Offences are to be dealt withal; what Power the Churches have, and how they ought to exert that Power, and that what they do must be done in the Name of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. v. 11, 12, 13. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14. Titus i. 10. Rev. ii. 14.

Seeing then we have such a Platform of Worship and Discipline laid down in the Word, it is the great Concern of Churches to keep exactly to the Rule in all Administrations, both in respect of Worship and Discipline, that nothing either in Matter or Form be omitted that God requires, nor done but what the Lord commands: We should be as exact as Moses was in making the Tabernacle.

For (1.) we are strictly enjoined to keep close to Divine Appointments. Under the legal Dispensation, there was a Charge neither to add nor diminish, Deut. xii. Now Christ who had the Pre-eminency of Moses, being faithful in God's House as a Son, hath not left the Worship and Government of his House more imperfect under the Gospel, nor his People more at Liberty to add or diminish than Moses did under the Law, Matt. xxviii. 20. Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, &c. John iv. 23. The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. That only is Worship in Truth, that is ruled by the Word of Truth. And they are such Worshipers that the Father seeks for.

(2) If we mix the Worship of God with our own Inventions, we pollute his Institutions; Exod. xx. 25. An Altar of

of Earth shall you make to me. And if you will needs make it of Stone, it shall not be of beewen Stone; for if you have list up a Tool upon it, you have polluted it. The Worship is polluted, and God is dishonored; we do not sanctify the Name of God in our Approaches to him, if we keep not close to his Appointments. Nadab and Abihu did not sanctify the Name of God in their Approach to him, Lev. x. 1. Yet they were the Priests of the Lord to whom it belonged to offer Incense; they had Censers, they had Incense both of divine Appointment, but they took Fire which the Lord commanded them not. And God manifested his Displeasure against it, he sent a Fire from himself and slew them. Our God is a consuming Fire still, and there had need be Awe and Fear in worshipping him, so that his Name may be sanctified by us; otherwise the nearer we approach to him, the more Danger we are in.

(3.) We cannot act either in Obedience or in Faith in Matters of Worship or Discipline, unless we keep close to Divine Appointments. Every Act of Obedience presupposeth a Precept, and every Act of Faith presupposeth a Promise: If we act without a Command, we may expect that God will say to us, as he did to Israel, Who hath required this at your Hands? This is to do as Nadab and Abihu did, to offer that which God commanded not; And are we sure that we shall escape better than they? Has not God said, I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh me, and before all the People I will be glorified? And can we sanctify the Name of God in drawing nigh to him, if we keep not close to Divine Appointments? And if what we do be not done in Faith, it will not be acceptable to God. Without Faith it is impossible to please God. How can we bottom on Christ for Acceptance in any Thing that is done by us, where we have no Promise of Acceptance to look to? Could Churches keep to the Rule both in Worship and Discipline, how amiable would they be in the Eyes of God! The Apostle speaks highly of the Church of Colosse. Col. ii. 5. Tho' I am absent in Body, yet am I present in Spirit, joying and rejoicing, beholding your Order, and the Stedfastness of your Faith in Christ Jesus. Now that Order as well as Faith may be preserved and maintained in the Churches of the Saints, is the Design of this ensuing Treatise, and shall be the Prayer of the Author, to him who is the God of Peace and Order, and not of Confusion, in all the Churches of the Saints.

A DISCOURSE

A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
CHURCH-GOVERNMENT.

C H A P. I.

Containing the various Acceptations of the Word CHURCH.

THE word CHURCH is variously taken in Scripture. *First*, By the word Church we are to understand, the universal invisible Church, which consists of all the elect of God, that ever were, are, or shall be in this World. Eph. v. 25. *Husbands love your Wives, as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of Water by the Word, &c.* They were his Church antecedent to their Sanctification, they were united to him, they were Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones; ver. 30. and there lay the great Mystery that the Apostle was handling of, in shewing the Union that was between a Man and his Wife; they who were really and personally two, were relatively one. He saith, *This is a great Mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.* And it remains a great Mystery to many of the People of God to this Day, That all the Elect of God, many of whom are not yet brought

brought forth, should be considered as the Church, and so closely united to Christ: It is such a Mystery, that they cannot reach it, though the Scripture be plain and positive in this Matter: Ephes. i. 10. *That in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times he might gather together in one, all Things, both which are in Heaven and in Earth, in him, even in Christ Jesus.* This Dispensation was when he took our Nature on him; then was the fulness of Time, Gal. iv. 4. He reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God in one Body (that is, all the Elect both of Jews and Gentiles) Eph. ii. 16. Now Jew and Gentile were never one Body politick, therefore it must be one Body mystical, which could be no other way but by Union with him who was the mystical Head. He abolished the Enmity, &c. to make to himself, of twain, one new Man, so making peace. This Peace was made by the Blood of the Cross, and then were they made one new Man in Christ; he was the Head, and they the Body, Col. i. 18. And he is the Head of the Body, the Church: This is the mystical Body, and it is from this Head that they receive Spirit and Life, and Motion: Eph. i. 22, 23. *And gave him to be Head over all Things to the Church, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* In all these Places is to be understood the Elect, which is the universal invisible Church. It is such a Church as Christ loved and died for, antecedent to their Sanctification; and it comprehends in it all that Christ loved and gave himself for, therefore it comprehends in it all the Elect of God. Paul was one of these long before his Conversion; he saith, *He loved me and gave himself for me.*

First, By the Church sometimes is understood the universal visible Church, which is made up of all Believers in the World, such as are called out of the World by the Word to embrace Jesus Christ: Eph. iii. 21. *To him be Glory in the Church throughout all Ages.* I cannot restrain this to any particular Church, but must take it of the universal visible Church, which shall continue throughout all Ages, when a particular Church shall be removed or may be removed. 1 Cor. x. 32. *Give no Offence to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God.* I see no reason why Jew and Gentile here should be taken universally, and the Church

Church of God restrictively. Besides, it is the Church of *Corinth* which is here cautioned, that they give no Offence to the Church of God. All Believers in the World are the Church of God, though they are no otherwise embodied than as they are called in one hope of their Calling. *Eph. iv. 4. There is one Body, even as ye are called in one hope of your Calling, &c.* But here is one Objection that I have met withal against this, That a People cannot have the Denomination of a Church, unless they be gathered together in one Place. To this I answer, If this Objection have any weight in it, then there is no such thing as the universal invisible Church, consisting of all the Elect: For though they be gathered together in one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they were never as yet gathered together in one Place. They are called the Church, they are the Church of the First-born, *Heb. xii. 23. that are written in Heaven.*

Secondly, If this Objection will hold, then a particular instituted Church can no otherwise be denominated a Church than as they are gathered together in one Place for the Worship of God: When they are parted asunder, then they are no Church; and if they are no Church, then there be no Officers; for there can be no Shepherd, if there be no Flock. But we find them stiled the Church of God in the Epistles that were sent to them, though they were not together in one Place when the Epistles were written: *1 Cor. xiv. 23. If therefore the whole Church be come together into one Place, &c.* These are still a Church, being embodied according to rule, and do bear the Denomination of a Church, whether they are together or asunder. The Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* were the Elders of the Church, though the Church was not together in one Place. *Acts xx. 17. And from Miletus he sent and called for the Elders of the Church, &c.*

Thirdly, By this word Church we are to understand a particular instituted Church. Now a particular instituted Church must be distinguished according to its Constitution. 1st. By an instituted Church we are to understand a National Church. *Acts vii. 38. This is he that was in the Church in the Wilderness.* The Church was the Church of the

the Jews that was a National Church. They had a National Altar to offer their Sacrifices on: *Exod. xxiv. 4. And Moses builded an Altar under a Hill, and twelve Pillars, according to the twelve Tribes of Israel. And Moses sent young Men of the Children of Israel, and offered Burnt-Offerings thereon, &c.* They had a National Priesthood, *Aaron* was their High Priest; they had a National Place of Worship, which was first at *Shilo*, after that at *Jerusalem*, whither the Tribes went up to worship. There was but one golden Candlestick under the legal Dispensation, *Zach. iv. ult.*

2dly. By an instituted Church we are to understand a particular Congregation, the Matter whereof are visible Saints, and the Form mutual Consent and Agreement. *1 Cor. i. 2. Unto the Church of Corinth sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints. 1 Thess. i. 1. Unto the Church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Such were the seven Churches in *Asia*, *Rev. ii. and iii. Chapters.*

Now this is the Church I intend to treat of, a particular instituted Church, an incorporated Body, to the End that God may be worshipped by them according to his own Appointment.

C H A P. II.

Containing a Description of an instituted Church of CHRIST.

AN instituted Church of Christ is a competent Number of visible Saints joined together by mutual Consent, to worship God according to his own Appointment, to the Honour of God through Christ, and their own mutual Edification in Subordination thereunto.

First, There must be a competent Number, every Community or incorporated Body must consist of so many as are capable to keep themselves pure. The Church must not only

only be pure in its first Constitution, but they must also keep themselves pure; and the Power by which this must be done must reside in themselves: There is no foreign Power that can act judicially in an instituted Church; the most that they can do is by way of brotherly Advice. When Persons are embodied together, it is possible there may be one that offends, and likewise one to whom the Offence may be known: He must tell him his Fault in private; if he do not hear him, he must take two or three with him: Here are three at least; and if he do not hear them, he must tell it to the Church. Now it is not likely that the Offender, that was to be dealt with by a greater Number the second Time than he was at the first, should in the third Place be dealt with by a lesser Number, or by a Number equal to those that dealt with him in the second Place, seeing it is now come to the Decision of the Matter. I cannot think there can be less than seven or eight to keep the Body pure in Case of Offence.

Secondly, The Matter of a visible Church must be visible Saints. This I shall prove, *First*, Typically. *Secondly*, Prophetically; and *Thirdly*, Historically.

(1.) Typically. There are two Types I do apprehend, that did eminently, point at a Gospel-instituted Church, 1st. The Tabernacle. 2^{ly}. The Temple.

1st. The Tabernacle. I suppose by the Tabernacle an instituted Church is often intended. I cannot but think that *David* had an Eye to Gospel-Churches, Psalm lxxxiv. 1. When he cries out, *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts!* Tabernacles in the plural Number. There was but one Tabernacle in the Time of the Law. So Psalm. xv. 1. *Who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, and who shall abide in thy Holy Hill?* The Qualifications of the Subject after-mentioned, to wit, walking uprightly, working Righteousness, and speaking the Truth from the Heart, shew it to be a Gospel-Church, there being no such Pre-qualifications prescribed unto the Jews. When the Contest was concerning the Gentiles, whether they should be circumcised, Acts xv. after *Simeon* had declared, how God at the first did visit the *Gentiles*, to take out of them a People

ple for his Name, *James* speaks and tells them, that *to this agrees the Words of the Prophet, After this will I return and build again the Tabernacle of David, which was fallen down, and I will build again the Ruins thereof, and I will set it up.* The Tabernacle of David then fell, when the National Church of the *Jews* was demolished; and it was built again when the *Gentiles* were embodied into a Church-State. That the *Gentiles*, about whom there was this great Contest, were embodied into a Church-State, is evident, *ver. 3.* and being brought on their Way by the Church, *Ec. Rev. xiii. 6. And he opened his Mouth in Blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his Name and his Tabernacle, and them that dwell in Heaven.*

2ly, The Temple, that also was a Type of a Gospel-Church, I mean of an instituted Church. *First*, Such a Church was prophesied of under the Name of the Temple, *Ezek. xl.* and so onward: The Temple that was there measured was a Gospel-Temple. *2 Cor. vi. 16. What Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? for ye are the Temple of the living God: Ye, the Church of Corinth, to whom he wrote this Epistle. Rev. xi. 1. And there was given me a Reed like unto a Rod: and the Angel said, Arise, measure the Temple, and the Altar, and them that worship therein.* There was no Temple in *John's* Time, that could have the measuring Rod of the Word laid over it, but a Gospel-Temple, which is no other but a Gospel-instituted Church. Now if the Tabernacle and the Temple were Types of an instituted Church, there must be some Resemblance between the Types and the Antitype. The Question then is, In what Respects both these did resemble a Gospel-instituted Church?

I answer, *First*, In Respect of the Matter. *Secondly*, In Respect of the Form. But at present I shall speak only to the Matter, and then to the Form under the second Head. The Matter of the Tabernacle, and also of the Temple was prepared Matter, which was made fit for its Place before it was joined. As for the Tabernacle, *Moses* was admonished of God to see to it, that all Things were made according to the Pattern that he had shewed him in the Mount, and accordingly he did; *Exod. xxxix. 43. And Moses*

Moses did look upon all the Work, and behold they had done it as the Lord commanded. Secondly, The Matter of the Temple was prepared Matter; 1 Kings v. 17, 18. And the King commanded, and they brought great Stones, costly Stones, and hewed Stones to lay the Foundation of the Temple; and Solomon's Builders, and Hiram's Builders did hew them, and the Stone-Squarers: So they prepared Timber and Stones to build the House. And it was builded of Stone made ready before it was brought thither.

Answerable unto this, an instituted Church must be built of prepared Matter: It is a spiritual House, and must be built with spiritual Matter; the Matter must be spiritual antecedent to the Formation of the House. A spiritual House cannot be built of carnal Matter; the Foundation Stone is a living Stone, and the Superstructure must be living Stones that must first come to the Foundation Stone, and afterward be joined one to the other, by which they become a spiritual House, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

(2.) I shall prove it Prophetically. The Reason why I go back to the Prophets to prove the Matter of an instituted Church to be visible Saints, is, because such a Church is built upon the Prophets as well as the Apostles, Christ himself the chief Corner-Stone; Eph. ii. 21, 22, 23. In whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth to a holy Temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit; Ye, the Church of Ephesus, to whom he wrote this Epistle, I say I shall prove it Prophetically, that the Matter of an instituted Church must be visible Saints: Psal. xv. 1. Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, and who shall dwell in thy Holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and doth Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth from his Heart, &c. Psal. xxiv. 3. Who shall ascend into the Hill of God, and who shall stand in his Holy Place? He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart, &c. That this is prophetical of the Matter of a Gospel-instituted Church, is evident; for there were no such Prequalifications required under the Law. Then a Jew, as such, being circumcised, might ascend into the Hill of God; so that David needed not put the Question, with Respect to that Dispensation; it was well known who might ascend: God had

declared his Mind in it in Words at length, *Exod. xxiii. 17. All thy Males shall appear before Me three Times a Year*; that was at the three Feasts, as appears in the preceding Verses. Had the Question been put with Respect to that Dispensation, it would have reduced the Congregation of *Israel* to a small Number, there being so many among them that had neither clean Hands nor pure Hearts; and would also have made void the Institution of God, that had appointed all their Males to appear before him three Times a Year.

(3.) I shall prove it Historically, that the Matter of those Churches, that were constituted in the Apostles Times, were visible Saints. *1 Cor. i. 2. Unto the Church of God that is at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints. Philip. i. 1. To all the Saints at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. For God is the Author of Peace and not of Confusion, as in all Churches of the Saints.* Now this Sanctity consists in inherent Holiness, in the Judgment of Charity, and not in that which some call federal Holiness. *2 Thess. i. 3. Your Faith groweth exceedingly, and the Love of every one of you all aboundeth. This is inherent Holiness: Phil. i. 5. I am perswaded of you, my Brethren, that he that hath begun a good Work in you, will not cease to perfect it to the coming of Christ, as it is meet for me to think so of you all.* Charity thinks them to be what they profess themselves to be, while Life and Lip go together. Those that were added to the Church, *Acts ii. 45. were such as gladly received the Word, and were baptized.*

Thirdly, These visible Saints must be joined together by mutual Consent and Agreement, before they can have the Denomination of an instituted Church. This I shall prove the same Way as I did the Former. 1. Typically. The Matter that was prepared by *Moses* was not the Tabernacle, till it was joined together: *Exod. xxvi. 3, 4, 5, 6.* There must be Loops and Tacks made in the Edges of the Curtains, and *Moses* must couple them together, that it might become one Tabernacle. So the Temple: The Stones and the Timber were not the Temple, till they were joined together, and every Piece put into its proper Place. A House must consist of Matter and Form, and it receives

receives its Denomination from its Form. 1 Kings vi. 7. *The House, when it was in Building, was built of Stone made ready before it was brought thither: So that there was neither Hammer nor Ax, nor any Tool of Iron heard while the House was in Building.* Now as it was no Tabernacle, no Temple, till the Materials were joined together: So visible Saints make not an instituted Church, till they are joined together by mutual Consent: They must be builded together a spiritual House, as *Peter* speaks, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

2. I shall prove it Prophetically, *Isa. lxii. 4. 5.* It is a Prophecy respecting the Times of the Gospel. Ver. 2. *And the Gentiles shall see thy Righteousness, and all Kings thy Glory.* Ver. 4. *Thou shalt no more be termed desolate and forsaken, for thy Land shall be married.* Ver. 5. *As a young Man marieth a Virgin; so shall thy Sons marry thee.* In all Marriages there is a mutual Compact and Agreement.

3. I shall prove it Historically, that this was the Manner of embodying, and also of receiving Additions, when embodied.

(1) They were builded or joined together. *Eph. ii. 21, 22.* The Apostle speaks here to the Church of *Ephesus*, and tells them, that they were built upon the Prophets and Apostles; *Jesus Christ the chief Corner Stone, in whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth to a holy Temple in the Lord; in whom also ye are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit: Ye, the particular Church of the Ephesians; to whom he wrote this Epistle.*

1 Pet. ii. 5. *To whom coming, as to a living Stone, are built up a spiritual House, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable unto God by Christ.* This Building was not forced, but voluntary; they came freely unto Christ, that is the Foundation-Stone, and did by Agreement join together; for two cannot Walk together to pursue the same End, except they are agreed. They were not born Church Members: For they first came to Christ, before they were built up a spiritual House: They were lively Stones before they were put into the Building, therefore they must be formed by Force or Consent; but there was

no such Thing as Compulsion or Imposition among Christians in the primitive Times.

(2) This was the Manner of receiving Members after Churches were embodied, therefore I conclude it was the Manner of their Embodying, *Acts* v. 13. *And of the Rest durst no Man join himself to them* (that is, to the Church.) This shews that the joining was free and voluntary: None were forced into Communion, nor could any impose themselves upon the Church, but must satisfy the Church as to their Discipleship, and be received by mutual Consent. *Acts* ix. 26. *When Paul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join Himself to the Disciples: But they were all afraid of Him, and would not believe that he was a Disciple, till there was Satisfaction given by Barnabas; and then he was received, and was with them going in and coming out.*

Fourthly, This Agreement, by which visible Saints are joined together, must be to worship God according to his own Appointment.

1. It must be to worship God: *1 Pet.* 2. 5. *The End of their being built up a spiritual House is to offer up spiritual Sacrifices.*

2. This Worship must be of Divine Appointment *John* iv. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that Worship him must Worship in Spirit and in Truth.* In Spirit, in Opposition to Formality of outside Service; and in Truth, in Opposition to human Inventions. Now that only is Worship in Truth, that is ruled by the Word of Truth, both in Respect of Matter and Form. Such Worship did the Church offer to God. *Acts* ii. 42. *They continued in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and breaking of Bread and Prayer, all Ordinances of Divine Appointment.*

Fifthly, It must be to the Honour of God through Christ. This is the highest End of Church-Communion: This is the highest End of God, his own Glory; and that which is his highest End, should be ours. *Whether ye Eat or Drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God, 1 Cor.* x. 31.

Sixthly, The subordinate End of an instituted Church, is the mutual Edification of the Members thereof. *1 Cor.* xiv. 31. *Ye may all Prophecy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. Ver. 3. He that Prophesieth, speak*

eth unto Men to edification. Ver. 12. Seek that you may excel to the Edifying of the Church. Ver. 26. Let all Things be done to Edification.

C H A P. III.

Containing some Scriptures and Reasons to prove that visible Saints are the only meet Matter to be added to an instituted Church of Christ.

IF an instituted Church consists of visible Saints, then such only are meet Matter to be added thereunto. This I shall prove, First by Scripture; and Secondly, I shall offer some Reasons for it.

First, I shall prove it by Scripture. Psal. xv. 1. *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? and who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that Walketh uprightly, that doth Righteousness, that speaketh the Truth from his Heart, &c.* Psal. xxiv. 3. *Who shall ascend into the Hill of God, and who shall stand in his holy Place? He that Walketh uprightly, or he that hath clean Hands and a pure Heart, &c.* Acts ii. 41. *Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and the same Day there were added unto them (that is, the Church) about three thousand Souls.* Ver. 47. *And the Lord added unto the Church Daily such as should be saved.* Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that keep his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life (that is, by Way of Demonstration) and may enter in by the Gate into the City.* By the City here I understand an instituted Church, for it is not the Church triumphant; and it is such a City, that a Person must be duly Qualified before he can be a free Citizen, or can challenge a Right there.

Object. But some may say, *Must these visible Saints be really such, or such only in Appearance?* To this I have a few Things to Reply.

1. None but such as are sincere, such as are indeed Believers, have any Right or Title to a Place in God's House.

First. They have no Right to be baptized, which is a step antecedent to Church-Communion: Acts viii. 36. *See here is Water, What should hinder me that I may not be baptized?*

The

The Answer was, *If thou believest with all thy Heart, thou mayest.* The contrary that fairly offers itself is this: If thou dost not believe with all thy Heart, thou mayest not. When *Peter* exhorted them to repent and be baptized, it was not a mock Repentance that he exhorted them to, but a real Repentance.

Secondly, They are not within the Compass of the Lord's Prescription, unless they are sincere: They are not Hypocrites, but Saints, that are described to be meet Subjects, such as have clean Hands, and a pure Heart, Psal. xxiv. 3. And such are wide from Hypocrites.

Thirdly, Such as are not really Sanctified, can expect no spiritual Blessing in standing in a Church-State, because there is no Promise that they can Possibly take hold of. It is he that is really pure in Heart that hath the Promise, Psal. xxiv. 3. It is he that *shall receive the Blessing from the Lord, and Righteousness from the God of his Salvation.*

Fourthly, Such as are not really Holy, though they are outwardly joined to the Church, and are with them going in and coming out, yet in some Sense they are not of them. 1 John ii. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not all of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went from us, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They were the Sons of Hagar, not of Sarah, the Sons of the Bond Woman not of the Free.

Fifthly, Churches can receive Members under no other Consideration, but as really Godly. *I am perswaded*, saith the Apostle, *that he that hath begun a good Work in you, will not cease to perfect the same unto the coming of the Lord Jesus, as it is meet for me to think so of you all*, Phil. i. 6, 7. If Persons are not judged to be sincere, they cannot be look'd on as meet Matter for a Church.

Sixthly, Churches having not a Judgment of Infallibility, though such as are really Sanctified are in the strictest Sense the only meet Matter to be joined to on instituted Church, yet they may warrantably receive such as in Judgment of Charity are sincere: They can no otherwise judge of the Sincerity of the Heart, but by the outward Appearance. That such may be received, appears by the primitive Practice, even

even in the Apostles Times: There were Hypocrites received both to Baptism, and into a Church-State also. *Simon Magus* was baptized; *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were Church-Members, outwardly joined to them; there were foolish Virgins, as well as wise, outwardly walking in Communion together, *Mat. xxv.* But care should be taken, that if possible none might be received, but such as are sincere.

2. I shall offer some Reasons why such as are visible Saints are the only meet Matter to be joined to an instituted Church.

The first Reason is, Because it is the Will of God to have it so. I apprehend that this Will of his is comprised in the Commission, *Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. Go disciple to me all Nations, baptizing them, &c. teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you.* The Apostles, who well understood their Lord's Commission, and were never impeached of unfaithfulness, kept close to the Order thereof: They first disciplined, then baptized, and then added unto the Church, *Acts ii. 41.* Here were all the twelve Apostles together when this was done, and I doubt not but they acted jointly in this method. The Order of a Commission must be observed as well as the Matter, every thing must stand in its proper Place; Men must not first baptize and add to the Church, and then try whether they can disciple them or no; there is no Commission for such a Practice. The first Thing that is to be observed in the Commission, is, to disciple to Christ; and till that be done, Persons are not fit to be baptized, nor yet to be added to the Church.

A second Reason is, Because they are such only that are added by the Lord. *Acts ii. 47. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved:* That is, such as were sanctified. We can no otherwise argue the Salvation of a Person, than as it is the consequence of his Sanctification. You never read that any are added by the Lord, but such as should be saved: These were added by the Lord's Prescription, *Psal. xxiv. 3.* As for others, the Apostle tells you, *Jude 4. That they crept in unawares:* Had they been aware of it, they would have prevented it. And

And Paul speaks of certain false Brethren that were brought in unawares, that came privily to spy out their Liberty. *Gal. ii. 4.*

A third Reason is, Because such only are suitable Matter to the Foundation-stone, and also to the Superstructure that is already raised upon it. The Foundation-stone is a living Stone, the Superstructure are lively Stones; therefore they are lively Stones that must be added. Living Stones and dead Stones are not suitable, how can these cement together? The House is a spiritual House, and it is spiritual Matter that must be added to it, by which it is enlarged. There was not one Stone put into the Temple of old, but was prepared before it was brought in Place, *1 Kings vi. 7.* So must the Stones of this spiritual Temple be prepared before they are put into the Building.

A fourth Reason is, because an instituted Church is the House of God, the Place where God is said to dwell. *Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.* For the Lord hath chosen Sion, he hath desired it for an Habitation; there will I dwell for ever, for I have a delight in it. *Eph. ii. 22.* In whom also ye are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit. Now Holiness becomes his House for ever, and the Place where his Honour dwelleth.

A fifth Reason is, Because such only are capable of answering the End of Church-Communion, which is to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. A carnal Person cannot offer a spiritual Sacrifice. The true Worshipers are such as worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. *John iv. 24.* And they are such Worshipers that the Father seeketh for. God doth not seek for false Worshipers in a Church-state: They are true Worshipers that Churches should endeavour to receive into their Communion, because they are such that the Father seeketh for.

A sixth Reason is, Because that Persons that do discover themselves to the contrary, after they be received, must be cast out. This is a Reason by Way of Demonstration. If they may not be continued in the Church after they are discovered to be wicked, then they may not be received while they appear to be such: But they may not be con-

tinued

tinued in the Church after they are discovered to be wicked; therefore they may not be received while they appear to be such. 1 Cor. v. 13. *Wherefore put away from among you that wicked Person.* All Leaven must be purged out of the Church. Immortalities and Heresies render Persons liable to be rejected, if persisted in; and if such may not be continued when discovered, than by a parity of Reason, they may not be received in by the Church, being known to be such antecedent thereunto.

C H A P. IV.

Containing some Arguments, by which it appears, that such are mistaken that look on Children to be Church Members, while in an Infant State.

IF an instituted Church consist of visible Saints, such as in the Judgment of Charity are sincere, then such are greatly mistaken that do look on Children to be Members of an instituted Church of Christ, whilst in an Infant State. This I shall demonstrate in a few Particulars.

First, If Children are Church-Members in an Infant State, either they are born such, or else there is some visible Way of Divine Appointment by which they are made such: But they are not born such, neither is there any visible Way of Divine Appointment by which they are made such; therefore there is no such thing as Childrens Church-membership in an Infant State.

1. There is no visible Way of Divine Appointment, by which Children may be made Members while in an Infant State. If there be any such visible Way, it stands on Record in the Word: But there is no such visible Way standing on Record in the Word: therefore there is none at all. If there were any such visible Way standing on Record in the Word, some one or other would be able to produce it; but there is no Person able to produce it, therefore there is no such thing on Record in the Word.

2. They

2. They are not born Church-Members. If they are, then all Children are so born, or the Children of Believers only: But all Children are not so born, nor yet the Children of Believer's; therefore Children are not born Church-Members.

First, All Children are not so born, that is granted by all that pretend to any thing of Religion. None do look on the Children of *Turks, Jews, and Pagans* to be born Church-Members. The first Part then is granted.

Secondly, The Children of Believers are not so born. If the Children of Believers are born Church-Members, it must be by Virtue of the Faith of the Parent: But there is not Virtue enough in the Faith of the Parent to make the Child a Member; therefore the Children of Believers are not so born.

That which makes not the Parent a Member of an instituted Church, makes not the Child a Member of an instituted Church: But the Faith of the Parent makes him not a Member; therefore it makes not his Child a Member. There are two Steps that must be taken before a Man can come regularly to be a Member of an instituted Church. *First*, He must believe. *Secondly*, He must be baptized. Neither of which, nor both, make him a Member of such a Church: He cannot be a Member before he offereth himself, nor is he a Member before he is received.

1. He must believe before he is baptized; for this we have both Precept and Precedent. *First*, Precept: *Matt. xxviii. 19. Go disciple me to all Nations, baptizing them, &c.* He that is here called a Disciple, is in *Mark xvi. 16.* called a Believer. A Disciple and a Believer is the same Thing: For it is the same Commission, differing only in Terms, not in Things. Precedents there are enough. *Acts xviii. 8. Then Crispus the chief Ruler of the Synagogue, believed in God with all his House, and many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized.* If whole Households believe, then whole Households are baptized; if a Part believe, then a Part are baptized. *Acts viii. 12. When they believed Philip, preaching the Things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both Men and Woman. Ver. 37. If thou believest with all thy Heart, thou mayest* (that is, thou mayest be baptized) otherwise not.

2. When

2. When he believes he must be baptized before he can regularly be received a Member ; and for this there is both Precept and Precedent also. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go disciple to me all Nations, baptizing them, &c. teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, &c.* As the Word (*them*) in the 19th Verse is relative to all Nations disciplined : So the Word (*them*) in the 20th Verse is relative to all Nations disciplined and baptized. A famous Precedent of this orderly Procedure we have, *Acts ii. 45. Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized : And the same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls :* First disciplined, then baptized, then added unto the Church. Now if Faith make not the Parent a Member of this nor that particular instituted Church, then it makes not his Child a Member : But it makes not the Parent a Member, therefore not the Child. I would but ask what particular instituted Church the Child stands a Member of, whose Parent stands a Member of none ? Whether the Child be a Member of this or that particular Church, whose believing Parent is not a Member of this or that ?

Object. But some may say, *That under the legal Dispensation, the Children of Believers were born Church Members, and were circumcised the eighth Day. Why may not the Children of Believers be born Church Members now, and be baptized as well as then they were circumcised ?*

I answer first, That Children were born Church Members under that Dispensation, is granted ; that they were the Children of Believers, considered as such, that were so born, is denied. They were the Children of the *Jews* that were so born, considered as such, among whom there were many that did not believe. John x. 26. *Ye believe not, because ye are not my Sheep, as I said unto you.* And yet their Children were so born.

Secondly, The Constitution of the Church is now altered from National to Congregational, the Matter of which are visible Saints. Therefore Children are not born Church Members, because they are not born visible Saints. The Church was National under the legal Dispensation : All *Judea*, and all the Regions round about were but one Church. You never read of Churches in the plural

Number, till the Dispensation was changed : There was then but one golden Candlestick, *Zach. 4. 2.* but now there are golden Candlesticks in the plural Number, *Rev. i. ult.* The seven Churches in *Asia* were the seven Golden Candlesticks : And there were Churches in *Judea*, where there was but one before, *Gal. i.* and Churches in *Galatia*. Nothing is more clear in the Word than this, that Churches are now Congregational, and that the Matter thereof are visible Saints.

2. The Laws of that Dispensation are repealed, *Heb. vii. 10.* The Priesthood being changed, there is made also of Necessity a change of the Law, *Ver. 18.* *For there is verily a Disannulling of the Law, for the Weakness and Unprofitableness thereof ; for the Law made nothing perfect* (that is, the Levitical Law.) It is ridiculous to take our Measures from the Laws of that Dispensation, seeing they are all abrogated and made void. We may as well take our Measures thence for Officers and for Ordinances, as for Church Members, and so form a National Church again as that was.

3. There is a new Law given out, which is the Law of this new Dispensation, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* This new Law we are bound strictly to observe in the Constitution of Churches, the adding of Members, and the Administration of Ordinances, in respect of Matter and Form too.

4. When Children were circumcised the eight Day, it was done by Divine Appointment, *Gen. xvii. 10, 11, 12.* there was an express Command for it, *All thy Male Children must needs be circumcised.* Shew me the like express Command for the baptizing of Children, and I will contend no more about it.

5. When Children were circumcised, they also were admitted unto the Passover; *Exod. xii. 4.* *A Lamb for a House.* Children that were circumcised were a Part of the House. No Church Ordinance was denied to any Member, but Circumcision, which was never appointed but for the Males only. Why then is not the Supper of the Lord pleaded for Children from the same Example, as well as Baptism?

6. No Church Member under the new Dispensation was ever debarred one Church Ordinance, unless by their disorderly

orderly walking they debarred themselves. *Acts ii. 42.* There were not more added to the Church (though there were three thousand added) than continued in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and breaking of Bread and Prayer. Let me then know the Reason why Children should be accounted Members, and not be admitted to the Ordinances of the Church.

Secondly, If Children are not Members of the universal visible Church, out of which a particular instituted Church is gathered, then they are not Members of a particular instituted Church: But they are not Members of the universal visible Church; therefore they are not Members of a particular instituted Church. It is the Major only that needs proof, and for that see *1 Cor. xii. 13.* *By one Spirit are ye all baptized into one Body, and made to drink into one Spirit, whether Jew or Gentile.* A Jew that under the legal Dispensation was born a Member of that National Church, which was an instituted Church, under the new Dispensation may not be looked on as a Member of the universal visible Church, unless in the Judgment of Charity he be new born. There is now no more Notice taken of a Jew than of a Gentile, since Christ was offered up; *2 Cor. v. 16.* *Henceforth know we no Man after the Flesh.* Birth Privileges with respect to Church Membership are utterly ceased. *Eph. iv. 4.* *There is one Body, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling; one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, one God and Father of all: and to every one of us is given Grace, according to the Measure of the Spirit.* The Limits of this one Body (which is the universal visible Church) do not extend themselves beyond such as are called in one Hope of their Calling, nor beyond such as in the Judgment of Charity are gracious ones, amongst which Children in an Infant State cannot be numbered.

Thirdly, If Children in an Infant State are not meet Matter for an instituted Church, then they are not Members of an instituted Church: But Children in an Infant State, are not meet Matter for an instituted Church; therefore they are not Members of an instituted Church. It is the Minor only that needs proof, which I prove thus: If a particular instituted Church consists only of visible Saints,

then Children in an Infant State are not meet Matter for such a Church: but a particular instituted Church consists only of visible Saints; therefore Children in an Infant State are not meet Matter, &c. That such a Church consists only of visible Saints, I have already proved. That Children in an Infant State are not visible Saints, lies plain enough in the Word, *John iii. That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh*, putrid Flesh. We know that Children are so born: Sanctity comes not by Generation, but by Regeneration; and if the new Birth hath passed on any of them, it is not visible to us.

Object. But some may say that the Children of Believers are holy, i. e. they are federally holy: *1 Cor. vii. 14. Else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy.* And if they are holy, then they are meet Matter for an instituted Church.

To this I have several Things to reply. 1. If it were granted (as it is not) that the Children of Believers were federally holy, that would not do: It is not federal Holiness that renders a Person a meet Subject for Communion in an instituted Church. Under the legal Dispensation federal Holiness did serve turn, but it will not be sufficient under the Gospel-Dispensation: It is inherent Holiness that is now to be eyed: A Person must in the Judgment of Charity be concluded truly gracious, or else he is not fit to be received a Member. *It is meet for me*, saith the Apostle, *to think so of you all*, *Phil. iii.* that is, that there was a Work of Grace begun in them. The Holiness of Churches is such, that they are said to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints; but such as had no other but federal Holiness were never said to be sanctified in Christ Jesus.

2^{ly}. There is not a Word of Believers in the Text, nor are they so to be considered in their Sanctification each to other, but as Husband and Wife; their Sanctification was by the Ordinance of God, being in a married State, and it was when both were Unbelievers. Marriage is honourable among all, and the Bed undefiled.

3^{ly}. It is not federal Holiness that is intended in the Text, but Legitimation: for (1.) It ariseth from the Sanctification of the Unbeliever; and such as the Root is, such

is the Branch. No Body doth look on the Sanctification of the Unbeliever to be federal Holiness.

(2.) Not only the Children that were born after one of the Parents was a Believer, were holy; but such also as were born when both were Unbelievers: He speaks of their Children indefinitely; *Else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy.*

4ly. There is no such thing as federal Holiness under the new Dispensation; for the Covenant by which they were called a holy People under the legal Dispensation is done away. Two Things I would clear to you here. (1.) That it was a peculiar Covenant that *Israel* was under, by virtue of which they were called a holy People: *Psal. 1. 5. Gather my Saints together unto me, those that have made a Covenant with me by Sacrifice.* That was the Covenant which was dedicated with the Blood of the Sacrifices, *Exod. xxiv. 8. And Moses took the Blood, and sprinkled it upon all the People, and said, Behold the Blood of the Covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these Things.* This was the first Covenant, a Covenant that was distinct from the Covenant of Grace and often in the Hebrew distinguished from the Covenant of Grace by this Name, the first Covenant, when the Covenant of Grace is called the second Covenant, *Heb. viii.* I say, this was the first Covenant, that was distinct from the Covenant of Grace. *Heb. ix. 18, 19.* Then verily the first Covenant was not dedicated without Blood: for when *Moses* had spoken every Precept, he took the Blood that was in the Basin, and sprinkled the Book and all the People, and said, *Behold the Blood of the Covenant, &c.*

(2.) This first Covenant that was made with all the People is done away: *Zach. xi. 10. Then I took my Staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my Covenant that I had made with all the People, and it was broken in that Day;* that was when they weighed for his Price thirty Pieces of Silver. When the Covenant of Grace was confirmed by the Offering up of Christ, then was this first Covenant made void, the Partition-wall was broken down, *Israel* was no longer a separate People, therefore no longer a holy People: for their federal Holiness was nothing else but their Separation from the Gentile Nations by this

first Covenant: And there was no Covenant that ever was made with any one Nation since that by which they were a separate People. So that there is now no such thing as federal Holiness; nor are the Children of Believers in any Sense holier than the Children of Unbelievers, ~~_____~~

Fourthly, Children in an Infant-State are not capable of the Form by which a Person is joined to an instituted Church, the Form is by mutual Consent and Agreement: such are not capable to understand what is proposed, nor to yield their Assent and Consent. They know not what a Church is, nor what belongs to a Member, either as Matter of Duty or Matter of Privilege

Fifthly, They are not capable of answering the End of Church Membership, which is to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

C H A P. V.

Containing some Arguments by which the Independency of particular Churches is demonstrated, and Objections answered.

MY next Work is to shew that each particular instituted Church is an independent Church. I do not mean in the strictest Sense, for so God alone is Independent; and all the Churches of God are dependent upon him on an outward and spiritual Account too: But in respect of other Churches they have no Dependency on any Church or Churches for any authoritative or judicial Act or Acts to be exerted or put forth by them; there is no such Thing as inferior or superior Churches to be found in the Word; each particular Church is invested with full Power for the right ordering of themselves, without depending on other Churches (though brotherly Advice is not hereby denied.) It is one Thing to call in Help from other Churches by way of Advice, and another Thing to stand to their Determination.

That

That Churches are independent appears ; (1.) In that they are equally stiled in the Word, the Church or Churches of God, the Church of *Ephesus*, the Church of *Sardis*, &c. There is not one Mark or Character given to any one Church, whereby she may be known, as having a Superiority over other Churches. If there be any such thing as Superiority in any one Church mentioned in Scripture, let that Church be named, and her Power be made known, wherein she was above others ; which of the seven Churches of *Asia* was the Metropolis, that had the power of ordering and governing the Rest ? I suppose none will pitch upon *Laodicea*, for she seemeth to be less concerned about Matters of Worship and Discipline than any other besides.

And if either of the other six had the Charge of the *Laodicean* Church to have the over-sight of her, I doubt not but they would have been reprov'd for their Negligence towards her, as well as for the Miscarriages that were among themselves.

I say there is no Mark nor Character given to any one Church in Scripture, by which she may be known to be above others, or to have any Power more than another. There is no such thing as Cathedral or Diocesan Church, no mention made of any Metropolitan Church in Scripture : nor are the Terms of Parochial, Classical, Provincial, National or Oecumenical to be found in Scripture ; no other Name given to Churches by the Word but the Church of God, or the Church in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Churches of the Saints : No other Titles are Churches dignified withal, nor any one Church in the Scripture.

(2.) It appears in that Elders are equally stiled in the Word ; they have no Superiority one over the other. If Churches had a Superiority over Churches, it is likely that Elders would have had a Superiority over Elders also, but that they had not.

There is no such thing of Divine Appointment as Pastors over Pastors. This appears,

First, In that Elders (as I said before) are equally stiled in the Word, Elders, Pastors, or Bishops, which is all but the same thing. Pastors and Teachers are distinguished by

by their Gifts, not by any Office-power that one hath over another. There is no such Names of Distinction given to Elders of particular Churches, as there are given among Men, as Lord Bishop, Archbishop, Superintendant, Primate, &c. we never read the Title of *Reverend Father in God* in Scripture, there are no such Titles given to the Ministers of Christ.

Secondly, It appears in that they all act by one and the same Commission, *Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.* There is no other Commission to act by, nor is there any Clause in this that gives one more Power than another. All are equally commissioned by Christ.

Thirdly, It appears in that Christ did always reprove those that did contend for it, particularly *Mark x. 42, 43.* You know that they who are accounted to have Rule among the *Gentiles* exercise Lordship over them, and their great ones exercise Authority amongst them; but it shall not be so amongst you, but he that would be great among you, shall be your Minister.

(3.) It appears that Churches are independent, in that there are no Rules laid down in the Word, how superior Churches ought to act towards those that are inferior. There are Rules given, by which each particular Church may act towards their own Members, and deal with them in Case of Offence; but no Rules given how one Church may deal with another, in Case there are Miscarriages found among them: nor is there any Charge given in Scripture to one Church to reform another; but each Church where Miscarriages have been found, are charged to reform themselves.

(4.) It appears in that no one Church was ever blamed for the Miscarriages of another, but each particular Church is blamed for their own Miscarriages. There were five of the seven Churches of *Asia* blamed for their own Miscarriages that were found among them; but each of those that fell under blame, were charged with those Miscarriages that were found among themselves, not with others.

I suppose that neither of those that were blamed had superior Power over others, because there was nothing laid to their Charge, but what was found among themselves;

nor

nor had the Churches that were commended such a Power: for if they had, they would have been reprov'd for the Miscarriages of others which they should have reformed.

(5.) It appears that Churches are independent, in that there is no Appeal to be made from one Church to another. An Appeal is from an inferior Power to a superior Power; the Appeal that *Paul* made was to a superior Power: Thou hast appealed unto *Cesar*, and unto *Cesar* shalt thou go. When an Appeal is made, that Power that is appealed from can neither acquit nor condemn, the Power is wholly out of their Hands: *Acts xxv. 37. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, this Man might have been set at Liberty, had he not appealed unto Cesar.* But there is no taking a Case out of the Hands of the Church; thither it must be brought, and there it must be issued, *Mat. xviii.* Tell it unto the Church; if he neglect to hear the Church, then let him be to thee as a heathen Man or a Publican. Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven. Christ will own the Churches Acts, they keeping close to the Rule; he will not stay till a Case is issued by an Appeal.

Object. There was an Appeal by the Church at *Antioch*, to the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*; and the Matter was determined by the Apostles and Elders, *Acts xv. 2.* compared with *ver. 28, 29.*

I answer,

1. This was no Appeal made by any Member or Members, that were under dealing, from the Power of the Church at *Antioch*, to a superior Power; what was done was done by the Church itself. It was the Church that determined to send *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and certain other of them up to *Jerusalem*, *ver. 2, 3.*

2. This was no Appeal; it was but sending for Advice: there were certain Men that came down from *Judea*, that taught the Brethren, that except they were circumcised after the Manner of *Moses*, they could not be saved, *ver. 1.* Now these Messengers were sent up by the Church about this Question, *ver. 2.* that they might the better understand what the Pleasure of God was in this Matter. And when they came to *Jerusalem*, they were received by the Church, and the Apostles and Elders, to whom they declared the whole

whole of the Matter, wherein there was not a Word about the Power of the Church *ver.* 4, 5. And the Apostles came together to consider of the Matter, *ver.* 6.

3. We have the Resolution and the Answer sent them by the Apostles, *ver.* 22. to 30. wherein they do, 1st. Declare that those Men that came down from *Jerusalem*, and troubled them with Words, subverting their Souls, saying that they must be circumcised and keep the Law, had no Command from them to preach such Doctrine among them.

2^{ly}. That it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, to lay no other Burden upon them, than some necessary Things to be abstained from, to wit, from Meats offered to Idols, from Things strangled, from Fornication and from Blood, *ver.* 29. But here observe, the Holy Ghost was President in this Council, *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to them.* Where is the Council now, that can make such a Determination, and declare it to be the Determination of the Spirit of God? This is no Precedent for Synods now to act by: nor is there the least Precedent in all this for an Appeal to be made from one Church to another; for here was no Appeal made, as I have already declared, but only Messengers sent by the Church for Advice: A thing not denied by independent Churches, but owned and practised.

(6.) It appears that Churches are independent, in that, whatever Power Christ hath left behind him in the Word, he hath invested each particular Church with it, for the right ordering and governing of themselves, without depending upon any other Church or Churches.

Either Jesus Christ hath invested each particular Church with full Power for the right ordering and governing of themselves according to his Laws, or he hath not. If he hath, there is then no need to depend upon other Churches for authoritative Acts: If he have not, how shall this Defect be supplied, seeing he hath given no more Power to one Church than to another?

1. There is a Power given to each particular Church to organize themselves. There are but two Sorts of Officers in the Church; and they are Elders and Deacons, or Bishops and Deacons: an Elder and a Bishop is the same Thing,

Tii.

Tit. i. 5. compared with *ver. 7.* First Deacons, whose Office is to take care of the Poor, to see that they do not want, *Acts vi. 1, 2, 3.* and also that they are diligent in their Calling, to do what they can towards their own Maintenance, that no unnecessary Burden may come on the Church: for he that will not work, must not eat, that is he must not be maintained out of the Churches Stock, *2 Theff. iii. 10.* They are to receive the Collection of the Church, and to stir up such as are backward to their Duty, that so one be not burdened and another eased. Now the Choice of the Deacons is in the Power of the Church, *Acts vi. 5.* The Church being exhorted by the Apostles, they chose seven Men for this Undertaking.

Object. But some may say, Though the Church chose them, yet the Apostles reserved to themselves the Power of Ordaining them, *ver. 5.* *Whom we may appoint over this Work.*

To this I answer, (1.) It is observed by those that understand the Greek, that the Word that is here translated *appoint*, is a different Word from that, *Acts xiv. 23.* that is there translated *ordain*; so that for Apostles to appoint, and Churches to ordain, are two Things

(2) To appoint may signify the giving Rules to be observed in the Management of some Work or Business, how a Person ought to proceed in it. And so the Word *appoint* is to be taken, *Tit. i. 5.* *That thou shouldst ordain Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee.* The Apostle had given him Rules how to proceed, and now he minds him of it, that he might keep close to them. And in this Sense I take the Word *appoint*, *Acts vi. 5.* as much as if the Apostle had said, Do you choose out Men to whom we may give Rules to be observed in the Management of this Business. My reason is, because the Essence of Ordination consists in the Election of the People, and the Acceptation of the Choice by the Person or Persons so chosen. This is clear, *Acts xiv. 23.* *When they had ordained them Elders in all the Churches by Election.* There lies the Essence of Ordination. Prayer and Fasting are but Concomitants: Now this Choice in which the Essence of Ordination lies, was put into the Hands of the Church by the Apostles; therefore the Essence

sence of Ordination was put into the Churches Hands. Again, There is not a Word of Ordination after the Church had chosen them. If the Apostles reserved this Power to themselves, why had they not made use of it?

Object. The Apostles after the Church had chosen them, prayed and laid their Hands on them.

I answer, it is true, but it is not said they ordained them; all that is said is this, they prayed and laid their Hands on them: And so they did on *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* xiii. yet *Paul* and *Barnabas* were not then ordained, as will be made appear when I come particularly to answer that Objection. Ordination, and laying on of Hands with Prayer are two Things; the one may be where the other is not. But some may say, To what End was Prayer and laying on of Hands, if they were not ordained? I answer, the Scripture is silent in this Matter; and where the Scripture hath not a Tongue to speak, we should not be desirous to hear: Possibly it was an Apostolical Signal, confirming this Way of making Deacons by the Choice of the Church to the End of the World; but whatever was the End of it, it is most certain it was not done to stand on Record, to be a Precedent for future Generations, because After-ages were not to be stored with Apostles. There were no Apostles to succeed, and Elders of one Church have no Pastoral Relation in another; nor can they act as Elders in more than one Church, as the Apostles did. Again,

It is in the Power of the Church to ordain their own Elders, *Acts* xiv. 23. *When they had ordained them Elders in all the Churches by Election, &c.* so it should be read: though the word *Election* be left out in the common Translation, yet it is granted that it is in the Greek: And it is so translated in the *Geneva Bible*. *Wilson* in his Dictionary tells us, that the Word *ordained* here signifieth to make by Votes: and *Besa's* Note in the Margin is, that in the primitive Times Ministers were not made and thrust upon the People by Bribery and Lordly Superiority, but chosen by the common Suffrages of the People. And *Cartwright* does stoutly maintain it against the *Rhemists*, that it was not done by Imposition of Hands, but by lifting up of Hands.

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The Baptists also in their Confession of Faith render it, the common Suffragees of the Church : but here are some Objections that must be removed out of the Way.

Object. 1. It is true, the Churches chose their Elders, but the Apostles *Paul* and *Barnabas* ordained them : for the Word (they) is relative to *Paul* and *Barnabas*.

I answer, 1. If this be granted that the Word *they* be relative to *Paul* and *Barnabas*, yet it doth not follow that it was done by their Hands. It was done by them, if done by their Appointment and Advice. As *Solomon* built the Temple, though he wrought not in it himself in the Building of it. And *Moses* made the Tabernacle, though others were the Workmen.

2. If the Apostles ordained their Elders, by the same Argument they chose them too. Those that were the Ordainers were the Choosers. When they had ordained them Elders by Election ; here is both the Matter and the Manner, done by the same Hands. This Ordination was by Votes, or by the common Suffrages of the People, as they that understand the *Greek* do grant ; and they likewise grant that the *Greek* Lexicons do so render it. Now two Men cannot so ordain ; for in Elections there must be a Majority of Votes. Dr. *Hammond* confesses that the Word literally signifieth the Stretching out of the Hand, or holding it up : And that it signified among the antient *Greeks*, choosing or giving of Sentence or Suffrages, which in popular Elections, or Courts of Judicature, was done after this Manner. But he would not have it so taken here, because it was done by *Paul* and *Barnabas* by joint Consent, it being impossible for two to vote after that Manner. But if the Word *Election* must not be taken in its literal Signification, then I can see no Use of it in this Place, but it might as well have been left out in the *Greek*, as it is in the common Translation, and as the Doctor leaves it out in the Practice. But it seems strange to me, that the Spirit of God should make use of a Word, that is altogether insignificant in the Place where it stands ; that the Elders should be ordained by Suffrages, when there was no such Thing done in their Ordination : But I suppose that *Beza* and *Cartwright*, and the Author of the *Greek* Lexicon understood the Signification of the

Word in that Place as well as the Doctor.

3. There are now no Apostles to ordain, therefore it is now in the Hands of the Church, or it cannot be done; and if it be now in the Hands of the Church, then it was there in the Apostles Time, for there is no new Appointment since the Apostles Days; either the Church must ordain their own Elders, or it cannot now be done.

Object. 2. But some may say, Though the Church may choose their Elders, yet they having chosen them, they must be ordained by Elders, and not by the Church.

I answer, 1. I have shewed already that they are the same Persons that choose, that do ordain; therefore if Elders must ordain, Elders must also choose.

2. If Elders must ordain, then the Question will be, whether it must be Elders of the same Church, or Elders of other Churches. If Elders of the same Church, then at the first Constitution of the Church, where there are no Elders already ordained, there can be none, because there are none to ordain them, and most Churches have but one Elder at one Time; and therefore when he dies, there can be none ordained, to succeed him. If by the Elders of other Churches, then they cannot be ordained by Elders as such; for Elders of one Church, or ordinary Elders have no Office-power out of that Church to which they relate; nor can they act as Elders in any other. The Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* are not the Elders of the Church of *Sardis*. Ordinary Elders had never the Care of Flocks committed to them; their Charge is to feed the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers, *Acts* xx. 28. So again, *1 Pet.* vi. 7. feed the Flock of God which is among you, taking the Oversight thereof.

Object. Paul tells you that the Care of all the Churches lay upon him, it should seem then that he had the Charge of Flocks. I answer, The Question is about ordinary Elders, not about Apostles, whose Ministry was itinerant, who were not fixt to any particular Church. Paul was an Apostle, but ordinary Elders are not Apostles, nor can they act as Elders out of the Church by which they were chosen; therefore they have no Authority to ordain Elders in other Churches. If there be neither Precept nor Precedent

for

for ordinary Elders of one Church to ordain Elders in another, then there is no such thing of Divine Institution: But there is neither Precept nor Precedent for it, therefore there is no such thing of Divine Institution. Negative Arguments are good in such Cases as these.

Obj. 3. But Ordination must be by Imposition of Hands, and that of such as once Hands have been imposed on already.

I answer, This Objection hath no Foundation at all in the Scripture, though it be commonly made; nor is there any thing like it: yet I shall endeavor to move it out of the Way.

1. Then you must prove the Apostolical Line to remain without Interruption, and that there are some in being to this Day that had their Ordination by Imposition of Hands successively from the Apostles, or else you will not find any such to ordain: if there hath been a Cessation of such Ordination but one Age, there is now no Recovery of it. An Error in the Foundation cannot be recovered in the Superstructure: if Imposition of Hands by such as on whom Hands have been imposed, be an essential in Ordination, then if the Apostolical Line be broken, there is an essential in Ordination irrecoverably lost; but that the Apostolical Line hath continued to this Day without Interruption, can never be proved. Antichrist having spread his Wings over the whole European World for so long a Time, and having had such a Power where he hath set footing, and being such an Admirer of the Image he made to the first Beast, which Image consisted in a Subordination of Churches unto Churches, and Officers unto Officers, which utterly defaced the Platform given out by Christ and his Apostles, in respect of Churches and Church-Officers: I say, he being such an Admirer of this Image, that they that dwell on the Earth every where must make it, and such a Power to give Life to this Image, that it should speak and cause that as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast should be killed, *Rev. xiii. 14, 15.* What room was there left for the Apostolical Line to continue where this Image was adored? Now wherever Antichrist hath prevailed, this Image of the first Beast, the Catholick visible Church, headed by the Bishop of Rome, consisting of a Subordination of Churches unto Churches, and Officers unto

Officers, hath been set up, which hath defaced the Order of the Churches.

2. If you could prove the Apostolical Line to continue without Interruption to this Day, yet you could not prove that Ordination of Elders must be by the Imposition of the Hands of such as on whom Hands had been imposed before: For first you cannot prove that the Apostles were ordained by Imposition of Hands themselves. Ordained they were, but not a Word of Imposition of Hands. Was *Paul* ordained by Imposition of Hands when he was made an Apostle? or was there any more in his Ordination than a Voice from Heaven (together with a Light appearing above the Brightness of the Sun) saying, *I have appeared to thee for this very Purpose, to make thee a Minister to the Gentiles, and lo now I send thee?* Acts xxvi. 16, 17. Nor can you prove that ever one Elder or Pastor of any one particular Church was ordained by Imposition of Hands, no nor that ever the Apostles ordained either Apostles or Evangelists by Imposition of Hands.

But our Protestant Ordination by Imposition of Hands can fetch its Original no further down than *Queen Elizabeth's* Days. She having chosen some Protestant Bishops, sent her *Mandamus* to some of the Popish Bishops to ordain them: they refusing, she sent again to one of the Popish Bishops, and some of her new-elected Bishops to ordain the rest; that Popish Bishop refusing, in the third Place by the Queen's Order they ordained each other, as you may see in the History of the Church of *England*, written by *Dr. Burnet*.

Object. 4. But some may say, That the Apostles did ordain by Imposition of Hands; *Paul* and *Barnabas* were so ordained. Acts xiii. 2. *Whilst they were praying and ministering to the Lord, the Spirit said, Separate me Saul and Barnabas to the Work where unto I have called them. And when they had prayed, they laid their Hands on them; so they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost.*

I answer, I grant that the Apostles prayed and laid their Hands on them; but I deny that they were ordained by this, and I have two Reasons for it.

1. Whatever Office-power, there was in those that laid Hands on *Paul* and *Barnabas* at this Time, the same Office-power

power had *Paul* and *Barnabas* antecedent thereunto. The Text saith there were in the Church that was at *Antioch* certain Prophets and Teachers. *Barnabas* is the first that is mentioned, and *Saul* the last, but both mentioned to be of the Number of these Prophets and Teachers.

2. *Paul* declares, *Gal. i. 1.* That he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, not of Man nor by Man; not of Man as human, not by Man as the medium, he was immediately sent by Christ: And having stayed at *Antioch* as long as was the Pleasure of God they should, their Ministry being itinerant, they were solemnly dismissed from thence to go about their Work elsewhere, according to the Appointment of the Spirit. And that was all that was done at this Time; no Office-power conferred upon them, only recommended to the Grace of God for the Work which they fulfilled, *Acts xiv. 26.* They sailed from *Antioch*, from whence they had been recommended to the Grace of God for the Work which they fulfilled. *Paul* was an Apostle before ever he came to *Antioch*.

Object. 5. But *Timothy* was ordained by Imposition of Hands, and *Paul* was one of them that laid Hands on him, *1 Tim. iv. 14.* Neglect not the Gift that is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery.

I answer, 1. This Text speaks not a Word of *Timothy's* Ordination; nor is there any such Thing Intended in the Text. Here is a Gift in him that he is called upon not to neglect: but a Gift in a Man, and an Office conferred upon a Man, are two Things. It would be somewhat coarse to read it thus, neglect not the Office that is in thee.

2. This was some extraordinary Gift, that was particularly prophesied of, that *Timothy* should receive by the laying on of Hands, before it was given unto him: It was given him by Prophecy, before it was bestowed on him by laying on of Hands.

Object. 6. But some may say, that *Timothy* did ordain others by Imposition of Hands, therefore he is bid to lay Hands suddenly on no Man, *1 Tim. v. 22.*

I answer, There is no more Evidence in this Text of Ordination by Imposition of Hands, than there is in the former:

mer: for there is no mention of Ordination in the Text, nor in the Context, nothing that leads to it in the whole Chapter

That there was laying on of Hands in some Cases in the primitive Times, I grant: That ever Hands were laid on in ordaining of Elders, I deny. Now to what particular Case this must be referred is not determined, possibly it might be on the Sick for their Recovery, the End of which was for the Confirmation of the new Dispensation. Now when this was in use, Hands were not to be laid on all sick Persons, to the End they might recover, nor was it their Duty so to do: If it had, I presume the Apostle would not have left *Trophymus* sick at *Miletus*, he would have laid on Hands and recovered him. And if Hands were not to be laid on all sick Persons, then there was good Reason they should not be laid hastily on any, but wait till the Mind of God was known in this Matter, lest some on whom Hands were laid should not recover, and so stumble some with respect to the new Dispensation, instead of convincing them.

Object. 7. But some may say, Though Ordination by Imposition of Hands be not so clear, yet Ordination by Elders cannot fairly be questioned: for it is beyond all Dispute, that *Titus* had Power to ordain, and that in more than one Church, *Tit. i. 5.* *For this Cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the Things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee.*

I answer, 1. *Titus* was an Evangelist, and had Office-power in all the Churches that he was sent to. This is no Precedent for ordinary Elders, who have no Office-power out of that particular Church to which they relate; nor is *Titus* a Precedent for Ordination by a plurality of Elders: If he be a Precedent for any, it is for a Prelatical Ordination, and not for a Presbyterian one.

2. *Titus* had his Commission immediately from the Apostles, and that none of our Elders can pretend to.

3. The Word that is here translated *ordain*, it is observed by some that it is a differing Word from that in *Acts xxiii. 14.* which is there translated *ordain*, and that it is the same Word in the *Greek* with that in *Acts vi. 5.* that is there translated

translated *appoint*: so that for an Apostle or Evangelist to appoint, and a Church to ordain, are two Things.

4. The Ordination of Elders is not the Work of one Man, but of many. It was done by Election, by common Suffrages, *Acts* xiv. 23.

5. *Titus* had not an unlimited Power, he was to do it as *Paul* had appointed him, which I conceive was no other way than by advising and directing the Church how they should proceed in this Matter. My Reason is, because he was to set in order the Things that were wanting. If this were to be done otherwise than by way of Advice, then he had not only the Power of ordaining, but of ruling and governing too; then the Discipline of all those Churches was in the Hands of *Titus*, and he that was an Heretick, as in *ver.* 10. must be rejected by *Titus* after the first and second Admonition: so that the Power of Church-Censure is wholly out of the Hands of the Churches, and in the Hands of *Titus*. And therefore if Churches give up the Power of Ordination into the Hands of Elders from such a Precedent as this, they give up at the same Time the whole Discipline of the Church into the same Hands. And then if their Elders be corrupt, they have no Way left to relieve themselves, but must lie at the Mercy of such Elders, whether they will right them or not.

Churches do little know what they do when they call in Elders to ordain them Elders: for where the Power of Ordination lies, there lies the Power to set in Order the Things that are wanting. And I am apt to think that such as have an itching desire to ordain Elders in other Churches, their Fingers do also itch to have the Government of those Churches out of the Hands of those Churches, into their own Hands also.

6. Evangelists, as well as Apostles, are now ceased; Who then shall challenge this Power of Ordination, if it be not in the Hands of the Church? (ordinary Elders cannot so much as pretend to it, for they have neither Precept nor Precedent to shew for it) And if it be now in the Hands of the Church, then, as I said before, it was in the Churches Hands from the Beginning.

Object.

Objec. 8. But some may say, that *Timothy* was enjoined by the Apostle to commit to faithful and able Men, the Things that he had heard of him, that so they might teach others, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. therefore *Timothy* was to ordain them.

I answer, 1. If this were granted, yet it would not follow that ordinary Elders might do the like: For,

(1.) *Timothy* was an Evangelist, 2 *Tim.* iv. 5. he had his Commission antecedently from the Apostle, and that ordinary Elders cannot plead.

(2.) *Timothy* was a single Person, he was not a Presbyter. This is no Precedent for Presbyterian Ordination, which must be done by a Plurality of Elders or Presbyters, for that is the Ordination that our Brethren do plead for.

(3.) What is there in this Text that looks like Ordination? the Text saith, *The Things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, that shall be able to teach others.* This is Matter of Instruction that *Timothy* is charged withal, not Matter of Ordination: he was to acquaint some particular Men, of whom he had some Experience, both in respect of Abilities and Faithfulness too, with the Doctrine that *Paul* had preached, both in the hearing of *Timothy* and others too, that so they might be furnished with Matter to teach others.

Here is not a Word of Ordination, nor is Ordination necessary to the teaching of others, I mean antecedently necessary. It is the Duty of every Man, as he hath received the Gift, so to administer the same: *He that speaks, let him speak as the Oracles of God*; so saith *Peter*. The Brethren that were scattered upon the account of the Persecution that arose concerning *Stephen*, preached the Word, and the Hand of the Lord was with them, *Acts* xi. yet they were not ordained.

(4.) The Things that were written to *Timothy* that respected the Church, were written to him to be communicated unto the Church, that so it might be done by them, and not to be done by *Timothy* himself; the Apostle writes to him about the Maintenance of Elders, 1 *Tim.* v. 17. *Let the Elder that rules well be counted worthy of double Honour,* that

that is, Maintenance, as appears in the following Verses. But must *Timothy* maintain them, or the Church? I think if those Elders that have a mind to ordain Elders in other Churches, were bound to maintain them too, they would not be so forward as they are to ordain. Nor do I find that those that contend for the Authority of *Timothy's* Ordination, do appropriate this Charge of the Maintenance of Elders to *Timothy* and his Successors.

I have now answered all the Objections that I remember are made against the Power of the Church, to ordain their own Elders and Deacons. I shall in the next Place make a brief Discovery of those Qualifications that Churches should have an Eye to in the Choice of Officers, both Elders and Deacons. And first of Elders.

1. Negatively: he must not be a Novice, 1 *Tim* iii. 6. *Not a Novice, lest being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.* By a Novice here we are not to understand a young Man; but a young Christian, one newly converted to the Faith: for *Timothy* was but a young Man, when he first entred upon the Work of the Ministry; but he was of considerable Standing in Christ's School, having known the Holy Scriptures from a Child.

The Reason why he should not be a Novice is, least he should be lifted up with Pride; and I think that Experience may acquaint us, that young Christians are more apt to be proud of their Abilities, than when they are of longer Standing, especially being called out to the publick Exercise of them, whereby there is Food administred for Pride to feed upon. The more Experience a Christian hath, the more he seeth his own Inabilites, and that will help to keep down his Plumes.

2. He must not be given to Wine, no Drunkard, nor must he be inclined to those intoxicating Liquors: he must not be of a quarreling Spirit, no Striker, nor yet a Brawler; nor must he be greedy and a covetous Man, 1 *Tim* i. 3. *Tit* i. 7.

Secondly, I shall speak to it positively.

1. He must be the Husband of one Wife, 1 *Tim* iii. 2. that is, of one Wife at one Time. This doth not prohibit the Choice of him that hath no Wife, nor yet the Choice of

of him that hath a second Wife, but only the Choice of him that is guilty of Polygamy, having a Plurality of Wives at one Time.

2. He must have his Heart seasoned with Grace, *Tit. i. 5.* This is such a Qualification as cannot be despened withal by any Means: he must be holy, that is, he must be such in the Judgment of Charity. Churches have not a Judgment of Infallibility.

If Elders be not gracious, whatever Abilities they have, they do not understand the Mystery of the Word, that is not attained by natural Abilities, nor yet by acquired Parts: It is a Gift from on high, *Mat. xiii. 11.* *To you it is given to know the Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to them it is not given:* The Word will be to such but as a Parable or dark Saying; the Book will be to them but as a sealed Book, and they themselves will be numbred among the ignorant and unlearned, such as wrest the Scriptures, as *Peter* speaks. Such are not fit to preach to others, that do not understand the Mystery of the Word themselves, they are but blind Guides at the best, and not fit for such an Undertaking: Nor may such as give not good Tokens of a Work of Grace upon their Souls be chosen, if the Rule be regarded in the Choice of them.

3. He must be apt to teach, *1 Tim. iii. 2.* not only fit to teach in respect of Abilities, but forward also; one that is inclined to teach. As a Soldier that is apt to war, is one that is inclinable and forward to go on when an Opportunity is offered, as well as skilful to manage it; there must be Courage as well as Skill.

4. He must be one that ruleth well his own House, having his Children in Subjection, that is, those Children that are at home with him, in his own Family: for if he be not skilful in ruling his own Family, it is not likely that he should be a Man fit to take care of the Church of God, *1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.*

5. He must have a good Report of those that are without, *ver. 7.* *Lest he fall into Reproach, and the Snare of the Devil.* He must be free from indulging himself in Immoralities, careful to cut off Occasions from them that watch for Occasions, that so he may not be justly charged by them that

that are without, for that would be a Stumbling-block in their Way, and prove to be a Snare of the Devil's laying, to render his Ministry the more ineffectual.

Particularly, he must be just and righteous in his Dealings with others, and sober with respect to himself, *Tit. i. 8.* he must be sober, just, holy, temperate in eating and drinking, and in his Apparel.

6. He must be ready to entertain the Brethren, that so they may come with Freedom, and have Society with him, and Relief too as the Case requires; he must be a Lover of Hospitality, a Lover of good Men, *Tit. i. 8.*

7. He must be sound in the Faith, and able to instruct others. (1.) He must be sound in the Faith, not only in Fundamentals, but in Points of lesser Concern too, which yet are not of little Concern. There be many dangerous Errors, as well as Heresies, that he must endeavour by sound Doctrine to convince Men of, *Tit. i. 9. Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, &c.* If a Man be not sound in the Faith himself, he will be more likely to corrupt some, than to convince and stop the Mouths of others. (2.) He must have Abilities to demonstrate the Truth of what he asserts, *Tit. i. 9.* he must be able by sound Doctrine to exhort and convince Gainstayers.

Object. *Are these all the Qualifications, that must be eyed in the Choice of an Elder? Must he not be a Scholar, and understand the Greek and the Hebrew, be skilled in Philosophy and other Arts of School-learning, that are held by many to be so necessary for a Minister?*

I answer, 1. The Qualifications I have set down are all that I can find in the Word, which is the Rule we are to go by. I know not whither to go for more than are there expressed. If this kind of Scholarship had been so necessary as it was held by some, I think Christ who was faithful to him that appointed him, and faithful over his own House as a Son, would have given us some Rule for it.

2. He must be a Scholar in Christ's School, or else he is not fit to be a Teacher of others. If he be not taught of God, he is but an ignorant and unlearned Person, whatever other Scholarship he hath attained.

3. Ministerial

3. Ministerial Abilities to preach the Gospel are not acquired by these human Arts. They are the Gifts of Christ, *Ephes. iv. 8. When he ascended up on high, he gave Gifts to Men: ver. 11, 12, 13. He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors, some Teachers. These Gifts were for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* But you will ask me, How long we may expect that Christ will bestow these Gifts? I answer, to the End of the World, as long as he hath Work for Pastors and Teachers to do, I mean ordinary Elders; such as were extraordinary, were long since ceased. I say, he will continue to give these ministerial Gifts to the End of the World, till we all come to the Unity of the Faith, to the Knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man in Jesus Christ, to the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ: And if so, then it is a straighter, easier, and cheaper Way, to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send forth more Labourers into his Vineyard, than to send Men to School in order to be Ministers, not knowing whether they will labour in his Vineyard or not when they come there.

4. The Apostle warns the *Colossians, To take heed that no Man spoil them through Philosophy, Chap. ii. 8.* I cannot think that so necessary a Prequalification to an Elder, which Churches are warned to take such heed of, lest they should be spoiled thereby.

But you will say, *If Ministers do not understand the Hebrew and the Greek, in which the Scriptures were first given out, how can they say to the People, Thus saith the Lord, not knowing whether the Scriptures be rightly translated or no?*

I answer, 1. If Ministers cannot say, *Thus saith the Lord*, unless they understand Hebrew and the Greek; then they cannot say, *Thus saith the Lord*, though they do understand these Tongues: for that which is now in being is but a Copy of the Original, which Original they never saw. Now there may be Errors in these Copies, for ought they know, as well as in the English Translation; and if there are five Versions of the Greek, as hath been reported, they cannot tell which is the right; that there are various Copies of

the Greek, is granted by those that have searched the great Libraries where those Copies are.

2. If it be necessary for Ministers to understand the Hebrew and the Greek, to be able to say, *Thus saith the Lord*, is it not then as necessary for the People too, to understand the Hebrew and the Greek, before they can receive any thing as the Word of the Lord? Their Faith must not be resolved into a human Testimony: *1 Thess. ii. 13. When you received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God.*

Again, The Hearers must not take any thing upon trust from the Mouth of the Teacher, they must search the Scriptures to see whether it be so or no. *Paul commends the Bereans for their Nobility of Spirit, in that they daily searched the Scriptures, to see whether those Things were so or no, Acts xvii. 11.* Now those Greeks at Berea had not the Original to search, they could have but the Septuagint Translation.

3. Either the Scripture is, for the Substance thereof; rightly translated, or it is not. If it be, then there is Light in the Translation to shew us whose Word it is, as well as in the Hebrew and the Greek. If it be not rightly translated, then I would enquire, (1.) Why it is not mended by those that understand it, and that see the Errors that are in the Translation? Why do you leave the People in the dark? (2.) I would enquire, Why Ministers that understand the Hebrew and the Greek, for the most Part have Recourse to the Translation to prove what they assert, if the Translation be not right?

4. If there be a Defect in one Translation, it is mended in another, or in the Margin in many Places: So that through Mercy we have it for the Substance thereof, and they that have most to object in this Case cannot deny it.

5. The Scripture carries Self-Evidence along with it, whose Word it is. The Harmony and the Authority thereof is such, as that it differs from all human Writings whatsoever. But here take notice, I do not oppose the learning of the Tongues, neither the Greek nor Hebrew, but only shew my Reasons, why it may not be looked on

as a necessary Qualification to be eyed in the Choice of an Elder. I can find no Rule for it laid down in the Word; which yet is a perfect Rule for us to walk by, Christ hath no where enjoined us to send Men to School to learn the Tongues, in order to their being chosen to a Pastoral Relation in the Church.

Secondly, I shall speak next of the Qualifications of Deacons, to which regard must be had; these are laid down together in the Word, *1 Tim. iii. 8.* You have their Qualifications both negative and positive; they must be grave, of a solid Behaviour, not light and frothy, not double-tongued, speaking forward and backward, one thing to one, and another thing to another; not given to much Wine, nor greedy of filthy Lucre: for a covetous Person in that Office will be under a Temptation to deceive the Poor that should be fed by them. *Ver. 9. Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience.* There must be some Experience of these Things before they be chosen, which is the proving of them, mentioned in *ver. 10. Let these first be proved, and then let them use the Office of a Deacon, being found blameless.* This is no Rule for the Church to choose Deacons upon Trial, as some have argued, such a Choice puts them into the Office before they are proved. Their Wives also must be grave, not Slanderers; sober, faithful in all Things. *Ver. 11. They must be the Husband of one Wife;* that is, they must not have a Plurality of Wives at one Time; he must also rule his Children and his own Household well. These are the Qualifications of Elders and Deacons, which Churches must have regard to in the Choice they make. And I think I may truly say, that these Things which were written aforetime, were written for our Learning; and are the Rule that Churches must go by, in the Choice of Officers to the End of the World.

Secondly, The Power of receiving Members, by which the Church is enlarged, is in the Hands of the Church, *Acts ii. 41.* the three thousand Converts there mentioned, were added unto the Church, *ver. 47. And the Lord added into the Church daily such as should be saved.* *Acts ix.* Paul essayed to join himself to the Disciples, and they were all afraid of him, and would not believe that he was a Disciple,

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ple, he made his Application to the Church. This Power of receiving Members into the Church is not in the Hands of Elders, nor are they concerned in it as such, but as they themselves stand in the Capacity of Members, as well as Officers, and so act together with their Brethren. We have but one Instance in all the Scripture, that ever an Elder concerned himself as such, or as having the Power in his Hands to receive, or to hinder the receiving of Members; and that was *Diotrephes*, one that had a mind to be a Primate, 3 *John ix. I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes that loveth to have the Pre-eminency among them, receiveth us not:* Whether this receiving was to transient Communion, or to a full and fixed Communion, I shall not determine. But here observe, (1.) This Letter of Recommendation was not written to *Diotrephes*, but to the Church: *I wrote to the Church*, which shews that the Power of receiving was in their Hands. (2.) That *Diotrephes* would have had a Pre-eminency among them, that is, the Church who was but equally concerned with them in this Matter. (3.) He refused to receive them himself, *he receiveth us not.* (4.) He forbids them that would have received the Brethren, taking upon him the Power of excommunicating, casting them out of the Church. (5.) There were some of the Brethren, that so far understood their Power and Privilege, that rather than let it go they exposed themselves to Ejection. (6.) This assumed Power of his is detected by *John, ver. 10.* therefore not to be followed by any Elder or Elders. (7.) There is from hence a Caution given *ver. 11. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.* This was an evil Precedent given by *Diotrephes*, and therefore not to be followed. I say, the Power of receiving Members is in the Hands of the Church; they must try and examine them themselves, to see whether they be Disciples, which is the only meet Matter to be received by them. I know not what Power Elders have to take their Declaration in private, and to report it to the Church, nor who gave them this Authority. I find no Rule for such a Practice. Such as profess to walk by Rule, should be able to produce the Rule for their Practice; the Church was in being before they were organized: There must be a

Candlestick before there can be a Candle put into it. Now if Christians have a Power to embody into a Church-State, they have also a Power to enlarge that Body. If ten Disciples have a Power to embody to day, they have also a Power to enlarge that Body to morrow: If others do tender themselves, and if they have a Power to receive Members before they be organized, then they have the same Power residing in them after they be organized; they do not nor cannot put this Power out of their Hands, into the Hands of Elders when they choose them. When the Incestuous Person was meet to be received again, the Apostle writes to the Church to forgive him, and to comfort him, and to confirm their Love to him, *2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.* it was the Church that cast him out, and it is the Church that must receive him; it is the Church that binds, and it is the Church that looseth; the Marriage-knot is to be between the Church and them, *Isa. lxii. 5. Thy Sons shall marry thee;* the mutual Compact is between the Church and them, therefore the Church must be satisfied in them, before they receive them.

Thirdly, The Power of dealing with Members, even to the rejecting or casting them out, is in the Hands of the Church; this appears in two or three Particulars.

1. In that Power of binding and loosing is in the Hands of the Church. *Matt. xviii. 17, 18. Tell it unto the Church; and if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a Heathen Man or Publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye (in the plural Number, that is the Church) shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.*

Against this there lies a great Objection, by those that are for Presbytery: *By the Church here (say they) is intended a Representative Church, consisting of Officers, in whose Hands is the Power of Church-Censures.*

In answer to this, I would propose a few Queries.

(1.) If this be a Representative Church, a Church of Officers, is it a Parochial Church, or a Classial, Provincial, National, or Oecumenical Church? If you say a Parochial Church, or the Officers of a particular Congregation, then I would enquire what Need there is of a Classial or Provincial Church, &c. for there is no Appeal to be made from

from this Church to any higher Power; hither Things must be brought, and here they must be issued; they must go no farther, and the Sentence that is past by this Church, which is according to Rule, shall be owned by Christ; what this Church binds on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven. I hope a Classial Church will not meddle with that which Christ hath confirmed, nor go about to untie that which Christ hath bound in Heaven. It is the same Church that binds on Earth, that must loose on Earth also.

(2.) I would query, Where we do read of a Representative Church in the Word, or what Word there is in all the New Testament that is of this import? what Reason may be rendered why this must be called a Representative Church?

(3.) Where do you find in Scripture, that the Officers of the Church are called the Church, distinct from the Body of the Members? I find the People often called the Church, distinct from the Officers, but not that the Officers are any where in Scripture called the Church distinct from the People. *Acts xiv. 23. When they had ordained them Elders in all the Churches,* they were Churches before they had Elders; the Church of *Ephesus* was so called distinct from their Elders, *Acts xx. 17. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders of the Church;* but these Elders were never called the Church distinct from the People. And if the Angels of the seven Churches in *Asia* were the Elders of those Churches as some think, then there is a clear Distinction; *Rev. i. The seven Stars are the Angels of the Churches, and the seven Golden Candlesticks are the seven Churches.*

(4.) I would query, Whether you do find in Scripture that the Power of Church-Censures is in the Hands of Officers; these Things have been too much taken upon trust by People, without having the Rule produced. It were well if Persons would search the Scriptures to see whether these Things are so or no, and not resolve their Faith into a human Testimony any longer.

2. It appeareth, That the Power of ejecting is in the Hands of the Church, in that the Church is charged where

this is neglected, 1 Cor. v. 1, 2. *I hear that there is Fornication among you, and such Fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles; and ye are puffed up, and have not rather humbled yourselves, that he that hath done this Deed should be taken away from among you.* There is likewise a Charge brought against the Church of Pergamos, Rev. ii. 14. *Thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, &c. And thou hast them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* This was a Charge brought against them for their indulging them, when they should have dealt with them. I have a few Things against thee, &c. That this Charge was not brought against the Angel, distinct from the Church (though the Epistle was directed to the Angel to be communicated to the Church (is evident, ver. 17. *Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*

3. It appears in that the Church is required to put away from among them the Incestuous Person; the Charge for rejecting is not laid on the Officers, but on the Church, 1 Cor. v. 7. *Purge out therefore the old Leaven, that you may be a new Lump: ver. 13. Wherefore put away from among yourselves that wicked Person.*

4. It appears in that there were many Hands went to the casting out the Incestuous Person: but had it been done by the Officers of the Church, there would have been but a few Hands concerned in it; 2 Cor. ii. 6. *Sufficient for such one is the Punishment that was inflicted by many: Or Censure, as the Margin hath it.*



C H A P. VI.

Containing several Questions and Answers concerning the Power of the Church in binding and loosing, and the Order of their Procedure.

QUEST. 1. *Whether it be in the Power of the Church to reject or cast out an Elder in Case of Offence justly given, obstinately persisted in, and clearly proved?*

I answer in the Affirmative, it is in the Power of the Church so to do. This I shall clear to you in a few Particulars.

1. Some Member or Members must begin the Work. Col. iv. 17. *Say to Archippus, that he take heed to his Ministry, which he hath received in the Lord, that he fulfil it.* But what if he remain negligent, must he be so left? May not a negligent Elder be rejected, and is there any Power, that can take such a Case as this out of the Hands of the Church? Or is there any Power to bind in such a Case but in the Church? The Church of Ephesus was commended for dealing with some, that did call themselves Apostles, and for searching them out, Rev. ii. 2. *I know thy Works and thy Labour, and thy Patience, and that thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tryed them that say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them Liars.* This Trial was made before the Apostolical Office was ceased, for John that wrote this Epistle was an Apostle.

2. It is possible an Elder may become immoral in his Principles, heretical in his Judgment, and such a one the Church may deal withal, Rev. ii. 14. *Thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, &c. and the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans.* This Charge would not have been brought against the Church, if it had not been their evil in not purging them out. There is likewise a Charge against the Church of Thyatira, because she did suffer the Woman Jezebel,

Jezebel, that called herself a Prophetess, to teach and seduce the People of God. If false Doctrine be continued to be preached in a Church, the Church must be accountable for it; which yet they should not be, if it were not their Duty to stop the Mouths of such Preachers.

3. An Elder is a Brother as well as an Elder; he was a Member before he was an Elder, and then he was a Brother. Now his being chosen into the Relation of an Elder, doth not destroy the Relation of Brotherhood, but every Brother is to be dealt with by the Church. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, tell it unto the Church*, Matt. xviii. 17. And the Church must receive it, when it is brought by two or three Witnesses, 1 Tim. v. 19. And when the Church hath received it, either he must hear the Church, or be rejected.

4. If the Church have not Power to deal with an Elder, then is the Elder in a worse Condition than the meanest Member in the Congregation, as being denied that which is a Means to reform and recover a Person that hath been guilty of Miscarriages, a Means made use of for the Recovery of the meanest Member in the Church; and the Church is utterly incapable of being freed from a scandalous Ministry, and each Member liable to contract relative Guilt, by holding Communion with him: for if the Church have not Power to deal with him, there is none that have; that is, there is none that have a Power to inflict a Censure on him for his Miscarriages or Misdemeanors in the Church. I grant, if his Offence be against the Civil Law, or so far as it is against that, the Civil Law may take hold of him, and the Magistrate may punish him, according to the Nature of his Offence. But this doth not untie his Relation to the Church, he is an Elder still. I would here offer a few Things for Resolution.

(1.) Whether an Elder be a Brother in the Gospel or not. I think no Man is fit to be an Elder that is not a Brother: and if he be a Brother, then he is to be dealt with by the Church, *Mat. xviii. 15, 16*. Secondly, I would query, What Power is appointed by the Word to deal with an Elder in Case of Offence, if the Church to which he relates may not do it? Elders of other Churches cannot do it:

For to eject an Elder doth not belong to Elders as such: There is no Rule for it, there is neither Precept nor Precedent for it: And that which hath neither Precept nor Precedent for its Practice, is not of Divine Institution.

Object. *Paul did cast out by his own Power, 1 Tim. i. 20. Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan to learn them no more to blaspheme.* Why then may not ordinary Elders of other Churches do the like?

I answer (1.) It doth no where appear that *Hymeneus and Alexander* were Elders. And it is much but it would have been noted if they had. If this must be made a Precedent for ordinary Elders to act by, this is the Way to take the Power of dealing with Members out of the Hands of the Church, as well as the Power of dealing with Elders; and so the Church shall have no Power of dealing left them.

(2.) It doth not follow that these were dealt with by a single Hand; though he speaks in the singular Number, he might be said to do it, in that he did order or exhort the Church to do it, and there is much Reason to carry it so, when we consider how he managed the Business with the Church at *Corinth* concerning the Incestuous Person; *1 Cor. v. 3. For I verily as absent in Body, but present in Spirit, have judged already, as if I were present.* If he had been present with them, he would have made no other Determination than what he had made being absent: Well but what was his Determination being absent? I answer, it was this, that when they (that is, the Church) were gathered together, and his Spirit with them, that in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Power of our Lord, they should deliver him to Satan, *Eccl. ver. 13. Put away from among yourselves that wicked Person.* This was his Determination, being absent, that the Church should do it: For there lay the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he would no otherwise have determined; if he had been present, he would not have taken the Power out of the Churches Hand: And in this Manner I apprehend he delivered *Hymeneus and Alexander* unto Satan. I cannot think that *Paul* would take that out of the Churches Hands, that he knew Christ long before had put into their Hands; that

that is, the Power of dealing with scandalous Members, *Mat. xviii. 17, 18.*

(3.) If this were granted (as it is not) that *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* were dealt with by *Paul*, without the Power of the Church, yet it would not follow that it is in the Power of ordinary Elders so to do. *Paul* was an Apostle, and had Power to act as an Elder in every Church where he came; but Elders of particular Churches are not Apostles: Are all Apostles? No sure; nor have (as I have shewed already) ordinary Elders any Office power out of the Church to which they relate, nor can they act as Elders in other Churches.

If ordinary Elders have any Office-power out of the particular Church by which they were chosen, I desire to know how they came by it? Whence it is derived? They have it not immediately from Christ, that they do not pretend to; for they can do no Miracle to demonstrate it: They have it not from the Church, for one Church hath no Power to ordain Elders for another: And if any Church should pretend to such a Power, I hope it might be no just Offence humbly to ask them by what Authority they do these Things, and who gave them this Authority?

And in the mean Time I would advise such Elders, as do adventure to act officially in other Congregations either to administer the Supper, to ordain their Elders, or to eject an Elder, to be ready to answer this Question, when put to themselves, By what Authority they do those Things, and who gave them this Authority? If it be replied, that they have their Authority from other Churches that call them to act after this Manner? I have two Things to return by way of Answer. (1.) If Churches have no Power to call in the Elders of other Churches thus to act, then their Call gives you no Authority; but Churches have no Power to call in the Elders of other Churches thus to act, therefore their Call gives no Authority. The Argument is negative, and if any deny it, it lies in them to give Instances of the Power of such Churches to call them in. (2.) If a Man may act as an Elder in two Congregations by Consent, then in ten, in twenty, and so become a diocesan Bishop: But still he will be to seek of the Institution of this Power, and

and at a loss to answer the Question, by what Authority they do those Things.

Quest. 2. *Whether the Church is to act by the same Rule in dealing with all miscarrying Members?*

I answer, 1st. As the Word is the Rule we are to go by in all Cases, so they are to act by the same Rule in dealing with every Member, whether it be an Elder, a Father, a Brother, or a Wife.

But, 2^{ly}. There are particular Rules laid down in the Word, with respect to particular Cases that must be regarded, and by which the Church must act as the Case falls out.

1. If it be Matter of Fact that is brought to the Church where the Fact is not disputable, nor the Evidence questionable; if the Offender do neglect to hear the Church, he is to be cut off without delay, *Mat. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 12. If any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or a Drunkard, or a Railer, with such a one no not to eat: Do not ye judge them that are within? wherefore put away from among yourselves that wicked Person.*

2. When the Case is mere Negligence, Slothfulness, where Persons are idle, and will not eat their Bread in the Sweat of their Brows, but would be maintained out of the Churches Stock, the Church is only to withdraw from them, *2 Thess. iii. 6. Withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition that ye received of us. Ver. 7. For we behaved not ourselves disorderly, neither did we eat any Man's Bread for nought.* Here the Apostle doth explain what that Disorder is, for which there must be a withdrawing: It is only the eating the Bread of others for nought. That this withdrawing must not be used in all Cases of Offence, but must be restricted to this Case of Idleness, is I think clear, (1.) By the Information that the Apostles had received; *ver. 11. We hear that there are some that walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are Busy-bodies.* (2.) In that the Apostle gives them an Exhortation, *ver. 12. Them that are such we exhort and command by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own Bread.* (3.) It appears in that the Apostle restricts it to them that obey not their

Word

Word by this Epistle, ver. 14. *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed: yet count him not as an Enemy, but admonish him as a Brother.* Now there is no other Branch of Disorder handled in this Epistle, but this of Idleness; therefore to this Disorder only must this Rule of withdrawing be restricted. In the former Case he that is dealt with by the Church is to be accounted as a Heathen Man or a Publican: But here he must not be accounted as an Enemy, but admonished as a Brother. This Rule is not given to make void the former, but to be observed in this particular Case, which is a Case that differs from the former.

3. If it be Matter of Heresy, there is another Rule to be observed, Tit. i. 10. *Him that is an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition reject.* If the Church reject him soon after the first Admonition, they are too quick: If they stay long before they reject him after the second Admonition, they are too slow.

Quest. 3. *Whether there ought to be the same procedure by the Church in all Cases of Offence?*

I answer in the negative, 1. If the Offence be privately given, there must be private dealing; Matt. xv. 15. *Moreover, if thy Brother offend thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone: No Body must know of it till this be done, no nor afterward neither, if thy Admonition take effect. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother; but if he refuse to hear thee, take with thee one or two more, and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church.* The first may not go alone to him the second Time: The second Admonishers have done what they are to do by themselves, and must immediately on the first Opportunity bring it unto the Church: And if he neglect to hear the Church, then let him be to thee as a Heathen Man, &c. I see no Reason why the Church should delay and try him a second, a third Time, and I know not how often, if he neglect to hear them; if the first may not go alone a second Time, nor yet the second Admonishers try him a second Time, why must the Third? Why must the Church wait in this Case? Nay, if the Church try him a second Time, or a third;

third; when or by what Rule shall the Church come to a Determination: We put our own Wisdom in Competition with the Wisdom of Christ in this Matter, if we keep not close to the Rule. To wait on a Person that neglects to hear the Church, is to act without a Rule, if the Matter of Fact be such as deserves Ejection when Obstinacy is added to it, and the Evidence full and clear.

2. In case of public Offence, this private Dealing is not to be made use of: *They that Sin rebuke before all*, 1 Tim. v. 20. that is, they that Sin publicly; the Harmony of Scripture must be preserved: this Rule must not be understood to interfere with the former, where the Brother offended is to deal with the Brother offending in private.

3. If the Case concerns an Elder, an Accusation must not be received by the Church under two or three Witnesses; 1 Tim. v. 19. *But against an Elder receive not an Accusation, but before (or under, as in the Margin) two or three Witnesses.* Besides the positive Rule which we are bound to observe, though we cannot understand the Reason of it, there seems to be this Reason: Elders being more obnoxious to the Malice and Envy of Men than others are, they are more in danger of being falsely accused than others are.

Quest. 4. *Whether a Person justly ejected by the Church, be at the same Time cut off from Christ, and so made incapable of Salvation unless he be received again by the Church upon his Repentance?*

I answer in the negative: For, 1. The Church did not ingraft him into Christ, when they first received him into Communion with them: Now that which the Church did not do, they cannot undo, No Person can be received a Member regularly, that is not in the Judgment of Charity a true Believer; and if he be such in reality, he had then an Interest in Christ before he was received by the Church. Either he had an Interest in Christ antecedent to his being received by the Church, or he had not: If he had, then the Church did not ingraft him in: If he had none before he was received, he hath none since. I speak of a real Interest, not of such an Interest as fruitless branches may be said to have that may be cut off, which

is only in Appearance, not in reality. If every one that is received by the Church have a real Interest in Christ, then Hypocrites as well as those that are sincere have a real Interest in Christ. There are and may be such in the Church that never had an Interest in Christ, and such as never had an Interest in him cannot be said to be cut off from him.

2. Once an Interest in Christ, and for ever an Interest in Christ. *John x. 27, 28, 29. My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me; and I give to them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any Man pluck them out of my Hands: My Father that gave them me is greater than all, and none shall ever pluck them out of my Father's Hands: I and my Father are one.*

3. A Person may truly repent, and yet not arrive at Satisfaction, whether he do repent or no; he may fear the Lord, and obey the Voice of his Servant, and yet walk in Darkness and have no Light, *Isa. 1. 10.* Or if he have some glimmering Light, yet not enough to offer himself to the Church; or possibly he may die before he have Opportunity so to do: Must such a one be shut out of Heaven, because he is shut out of the Church?

Object. But some will say, *That Christ tells us, that whatsoever the Church shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.*

I answer, 1. This must be restricted to a just regular Censure of the Church. But if the Church will put more into their Censure than Christ allows them by his Word, that shall not be bound in Heaven. But Christ never gave the Church a Power by his Word to cut off those Members from him, that he had united to himself.

2. This Binding in Heaven is nothing else but Christ's approving of and owning the Church in those Censures that are past by them according to rule.

Quest. 5. Whether the Power of the Church in binding and loosing, or any other Church-act, do not lie in the Majority, and whether they must not be called the Church; and the Minority be always bound to acquiesce in the Vote of the Major? &c.

I answer, 1. If the Case to be determined, may be yielded to without Sin, the Minority are to rest satisfied with

with the Vote of the Majority: For instance, if the Case be such as is in itself indifferent, only there is some Inconveniency to some of the Members, which cannot be redressed without a greater Inconvenience to other Members living at a great Distance one from another. If it be concerning Time for Week-days-Meetings, or Place, which are Things indifferent in themselves, there a lesser Inconveniency must be submitted to, and the minor Part rest satisfied with the Vote of the major Part: Or else I do not see how the Church should come to a Determination in any thing of this Kind.

2. If it be in the Choice of Officers, where such as stand in Competition are both duly qualified for the Work, and no just Exception to be made against either: Though the Members have differing Apprehensions, which of the two may be fittest, there the Majority must carry it, and the minor Part are bound to rest satisfied in the Vote of the major Part, because it is the Pleasure of God that Elders and Deacons should be made and ordained by Votes, *Acts* vi. 5. *Acts* xiv. 23. It were to no Purpose to go to the Vote, if the Vote may not determine it.

3. If the Majority be corrupt, as sometimes it hath been or may be in Churches, and the Vote so irregular, that the Minority cannot close with it, but they must sin against Light, and thereby dishonour God and wrong their own Souls; there the Power lies not in the Majority, nor may the Minority close with them, for they must do no iniquity, and God will own the minor Part in their non-compliance. *Rev.* iii. 4. *Thou hast a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments, and they shall walk with me in white.* After that great Apostacy of Israel to Idolatry, *Exod.* xxxii. when they madethem a Golden Calf, and Worshipped it, *Moses* took the Tabernacle of the Lord, and pitched it without the Camp afar off from the Camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation; that was the Congregation that fought the Lord, *Exod.* xxxiii. 7.

Quest. 6. *Whether the Sisters be a Voting Part of the Church or no?*

I answer in the affirmative, they are. 1. The Sisters

are an essential Part of the Church as well as the Brethren; the one hundred and twenty Disciples to which the three thousand were added, *Acts* ii. 41. were the Church, the same Church to which the Lord daily added, *ver.* 47. Now this Church consisted of Sisters as well as Brethren, *Acts* i. 14.

2. They are equally concerned as to the Welfare of their Souls with the Brethren in the Choice of Elders, and many other Church-acts, that Things may be so managed as that they may be free from relative guilt.

3. The Rule, *Mat.* xviii. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, tell him his Fault between thee and him alone*, is not expressly restricted to the Brethren, and I think ought not to be restricted to the Brethren, but to be taken indefinitely of Members, whether Brethren or Sisters; and if so, the Sister, when it is her lot to be offended, must proceed till she bring it to the Church.

4. The Sisters are not to be put out or withdrawn from when a Case is brought to the Church: If they should, it would be brought but to a Part of the Church, not the whole.

5. The Apostle did not exclude the Sisters when he wrote to the Church of *Corinth* to cast out the Incestuous Person, *1 Cor.* v. 4.

6. We do not find the Sisters were excluded when the Churches ordained them Elders, *Acts* xiv. 23. *They ordained them Elders by Election in all the Churches*; no Mention is made that the Sisters were denied their Vote: We have not any Instance in all the New Testament that ever the Sisters were denied their Vote; nor have we any Reason to conclude when the Acts of the Church are mentioned, of which Church or Churches the Sisters cannot be denied to be an essential Part, that the Church is but the Brethren, not the Sisters.

Object. *The Apostle forbids Women to speak in the Church*, *1 Cor.* xiv. 34. Let your Women keep silence in the Church, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; and if they may not speak, they may not vote.

I answer, this Prohibition is not to be extended to all Cases; and if so, then it seems to be restricted to the Sub-

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ject that was then in Hand, which will come under two Heads: 1. They were not permitted to speak in a way of Prophecy, but the Brethren might, they might all Prophecy one by one.

2. They must not enquire (in the Church) into what was delivered in a way of Prophecy; *If they would learn any thing, they must ask their Husbands at home.* But the Brethren might enquire into it. The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets. That this Prohibition is not to be extended unto all Cases is evident: For, (1.) A Sister having discharged her Duty in private, if it take not, she must tell it unto the Church, and lay open the Circumstances of the Matter, and be a Witness in the Case. This cannot be done unless she be allowed to speak in the Church. (2.) A Sister may be brought under dealing by the Church, and must she not speak in her own Defence? Must she be silent whether she be accused right or wrong, and so fall under the Censure of the Church, not being permitted to speak for herself? Is there any Law in the Church of Christ that judgeth a Member before it hears him? It is possible a Sister may be accused of Heresy, differing from others in Principles, though the Points held by her be sound Doctrine; and must she not be suffered to plead her own Cause, which it may be is the Cause of Christ? Must the Truth suffer, and the Sister suffer, rather than that she be permitted to speak in the Church? This I think would be accounted hard Measure by judicious Men. And if so, then those judicious Men that so account it, must restrict the Prohibition to some particular Case; and if so, what more likely to be the Case or Cases, than those that were handled when the Prohibition was given out?

Quest. 7. *Whether a Person justly ejected by the Church may upon Repentance be received again, whatever the Matter of Fact was for which he was ejected?*

I answer in the affirmative, he may. Luke xvii. 3. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: If he repent, forgive him.*

1. Excommunication is not to destroy, but to save, that is the End of it. And it is one end that should be

in the Eye of the Church, when they do eject a Brother or a Sister: *It is for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord, 1 Cor. v. 5.*

2. The Church hath a Power of loosing as well as binding, which Power is not restricted to this or that particular Case. And Christ will own them in the one as well as the other, *Whatsoever they shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven*: There is no Case wherein we can apprehend that Christ hath forgiven, but we ought to forgive for Christ's Sake also.

3. We find the Apostle writing to the Church of Corinth to forgive one that had been a great Criminal, 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. One that had been guilty of Incest, such Fornication as had not been so much as named among the Gentiles, and had been cast out by the Church, and upon his Repentance to confirm their love to him.

Quest. 8. *What Repentance is that which is sufficient to satisfy the Church to receive again a Person that hath been ejected?*

I answer, Such as in the Judgment of Charity is sincere; *If he repent, forgive him.* I do not look upon a bare say-so, without any Manifestation of Grief and Sorrow under the Sense of Sin, and a Reformation of what hath been amiss, to be sufficient; the Rule is, *if he repent, forgive him.* Repentance consists in a godly Sorrow for Sin, and a turning from Sin: 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. *For godly Sorrow worketh Repentance unto Life, not to be repented of: For behold, this self same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly Sort, What carefulness it wrought in you? yea what fear? &c.* Care to please God, and fear to offend him for the future.

C H A P. VII.

Containing a Description of the formal Cause of Church-Membership.

I Come now to describe the formal constituting Cause of Church Membership. 1st. Negatively, wherein I shall shew what is not the formal constituting Cause.

1. Birth-Privilege doth not constitute a Person a Member of an instituted Church: *all Birth-Privileges* with respect to Church-Membership and Ordinances are now ceased, together with the legal Dispensation: *The Partition-wall was broken down, when Christ was offered up*; that is, the peculiar Covenant that God made with Israel, by virtue of which they were a separate People: *Exod. xix. 5, 6. If ye will indeed obey my Voice, and keep my Covenant, then you shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me above all People: For all the Earth is mine, and ye shall be a Kingdom of Priests, a holy Nation*; that is, a separate Nation. This Covenant is now made void, *Zach. xi. 10. Then I took my Staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder. that I might break my Covenant that I had made with all the People; and it was broken in that Day, that was, when they weighed for his Price thirty Pieces of Silver.* Dr. Owen observes on this Place, that when the Covenant of Grace was confirmed by the offering up of Christ, the peculiar Covenant that God had made with all the People of Israel was broken, and Israel ceased to be a Church; then Birth-Privileges ceased, *2 Cor. v. 16. Henceforth know we no Man after the Flesh*; that is, from the Time of Christ's Oblation, as appears by the preceding Verse, where it is said, *He died for all, that henceforth they that live should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them*; and then it follows, *Henceforth know we no Man,*
&c.

&c. A Jew that before this Time was known after the Flesh, as being lineally descended from *Abraham*, born a Member of the Church, circumcised the Eighth Day, hath from this Time no more Notice taken of him than a Gentile, till in the Judgment of Charity he be New-born: 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. *By one Spirit are ye all baptized into one Body, and made to drink into one Spirit, whether Jew or Gentile.* Those Jews that gladly received the Word, *Acts* ii. 41. were not Church-Members antecedent thereunto; if they were, why is it said, *They were added to them*, (that is, the Church) *the same Day*? I have already shewed that Faith only, makes not the Parent a Church-Member, therefore it makes not the Children such.

2. Co-habitation makes not a Person a Member of an instituted Church; there is no such Thing as a Parochial Church of divine Appointment; we read of the Church of God at *Corinth*, but we read not that *Corinth* was the Church of God. The whole City was not the Church, nor were there more of the *Corinthians* that did belong to the Church, than such as were *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints*. There was a Church in *Rome*, but *Rome* was never a true Church; Pagans and Christians may cohabit, as the Believer and the Unbeliever did, 1 *Cor.* vii. Yet those Pagans were not Members of the Church at *Corinth*.

3. Transient Communion with a Church doth not form a Person a Member: A Member of one Church may have occasional Communion with another, yet that doth not dismiss him from his Place where he stood before, nor translate his Membership from one Church to another: barely Communion with a particular Church doth not incorporate a Person into that particular Body; nor is it regular to have Communion with any one Church in the Supper, till such Time as a Person is a fixed Member of some one Church or other. It is an unprecedented Case. They were first added unto the Church, *Acts* ii. 40. before they had Fellowship with them in breaking of Bread, *ver.* 42.

4. Baptism

4. Baptism doth not form a Person a Member of a particular instituted Church. For, (1.) The Ordinance must be administered antecedent to Church-Membership; if Christ's Precepts may be read in Apostolical Precedents, and Apostolical Precedents be a Rule for us to walk by. (2.) That which may but once be administered is not the formal constituting Cause of Church-Membership; but Baptism may be but once administered, therefore it is not the formal constituting Cause. A Member may be justly ejected, and upon Repentance received again; but if Baptism were the formal constituting Cause, he must be as often baptized as received.

2ly. I shall handle it positively. The formal constituting Cause of Church-Membership, is its mutual Consent and Agreement verbally exprest.

1. There must be mutual Consent and Agreement; without this a Person is at liberty from any Tie that is upon him to any particular Church; he is like a Lamb in a large Place, having none to watch over him, no Shepherd to take care of him; nor hath any particular Congregation the charge of him, nor is there any Tie upon any particular Congregation to him, there is no Church that hath any Power to call him to an account, or to deal with him in Case of Miscarriage, for he is not under the Discipline of any. Churches have nothing to do to judge them that are without, they can only judge them that are within, 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. No Body can tell to what Church he relates, nor doth he indeed relate to any. What Church then must be told of his Miscarriage, or who is bound to tell it unto any Church? Certainly Christ hath not left us so in the Dark, when he saith, *Tell it unto the Church*, but that we know what Church to complain to, even that same Church that he stands a Member of. He must be received a Member of some particular Church, or else in Case of Offence he cannot be cast out from amongst them; he that was never in, can never be cast out. God brings no Charge against any Church for not dealing with scandalous Persons, unless those Persons are some Members of those particular Churches. The Incestuous Person was a Member of the Church

Church of Corinth, and the Charge was brought against that Church for that they had not dealt with him, 1 Cor. v. *Ye are puffed up, and have not rather humbled yourselves, that he that hath done this thing might be taken away from among you.* They that held the Doctrine of Balaam, and the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, were Members of the Church of Pergamos, Rev. ii. 14, 15. and the Charge was brought against that Church: *Thou hast there them.* They were among them, they were incorporated into this particular Body.

That the formal constituting Cause is mutual Consent and Agreement, is evident in the Word, *Isa. lxii. 5. As a young Man marrieth a Virgin, so shall thy Sons marry thee.* In Marriages there is a mutual Consent and Compact; this Agreement is founded in the very Institution of the Church Mat. xv. 19, 20. *Again I say unto you, Wheretwo of you shall agree on Earth touching any thing that you shall ask of my Father, it shall be done for you.* All the Worship of God is sometimes comprehended in this Word *Prayer*, Prayer being a considerable Part of the Worship of God, and a concomitant of all the Parts thereof. *It is written, saith Christ, my House shall be called the House of Prayer, &c. Ver. 20. For where two or three of you shall be gathered together in my Name, there am I in the Midst of them.* This Chap. from ver. 15. to the End, treats of Church-concerns; and this gathering together in Christ's Name, I look upon to be into a Church-state, and I am not single in my Apprehensions. It is also the Judgment of *Robinson*, a Man that God was pleased to give Light into an instituted Church, when many other of his Servants were in the Dark in that particular Point, that this gathering in Christ's Name must be by Agreement. I do not apprehend how Persons can gather together into a Church-state to worship God according to his Appointment but by Agreement. *Can two walk together, so as to pursue the same End, unless they be agreed?* When Paul was come to *Jerusalem*, he essayed to join himself with the Disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and would not believe that he was a Disciple, *Acts ix.* This shews that this joining must be by Agreement, there must be Satisfaction

on each side; Churches may not be imposed on, nor may they impose on Persons to join with them, there being no Rule in the Word for such Impositions. And when such Impositions have been used, the most fruit they have yielded have been the Ruin of some, and making Hypocrites of others. *Paul*, though he was an Apostle, did not attempt to impose himself on the Church, nor would the Church be imposed upon: They must have Satisfaction that he was a Disciple before they would receive him, such only being meet Matter to be added to them.

2. This Agreement must be verbal or explicit; Persons can no otherwise know each others Minds but by their Expressions.

Query. What is it that such as offer themselves to Communion and the Church, must immediately agree about, that so they may comfortably sit down together?

I answer, such Things as are plainly laid down in the Word, as Matter of Duty to be performed, or Matter of Privilege to be enjoyed in a Church-state. We may not make the Bounds of Communion in this respect, straiter than God hath made them in his Word. Some Light as to the Matter of this Agreement is afforded by the Prophet, *Isa. lxii. 5. As a young Man marrieth a Virgin, so shall thy Sons marry thee.* As there is a mutual Agreement in all Marriages, so the Matter of that Agreement is mutually to perform the Duties, and to enjoy the Privileges of this conjugal Relation.

1. Then they must mutually agree that the Word of God is the Rule both of Worship and Discipline, and also of that which is Matter of Faith and Practice. If there be no Agreement here, there will not long be an Agreement about any thing; this must be owned to be the Standard by which Cases must be tried, and by which Churches must Reform when there is any thing of Disorder among them, or else there can be no Determination in any Case; they cannot agree what is Disorder, unless they are agreed that the Word is the Rule of Order. Nor can they agree how to Reform, unless they are agreed that the Word is the Rule by which they must reform: This Agreement binds to no more than what is our Duty. *To the Law and to the Testimony,*

Testimony, if it speak not according to that, it is because there is no Light in them. Matt. xxviii. 20. Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, &c.

2. Such as offer themselves to join, must consent and agree to keep their Places in the Church, as God by his Providence shall give them Opportunity. The End of Church-Communion is, that God may be Worshipped by an incorporated Body, 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye also as lively Stones are built up a spiritual House, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* This End cannot be answered by each Member, unless each Member keeps his Place in the Church. An Agreement here is but to perform that which God hath made their Duty. *Not forsaking the assembling yourselves together, as the Manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching, Heb. x. 25.*

3. They must consent and agree to bear their Part of the necessary Charges of the Church, proportionably to their Ability; for one must not be eased and another burdened: Bread and Wine must be bought, the Poor must be relieved, the Mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn must not be muzzled. If Persons will not Consent to this, it is a Sign of Covetousness; for Covetousness consists as well in withholding from others more than is meet, as in an inordinate Desire after that which is another Man's. The Apostle exhorts them to make up their Collections for the poor Saints, 2 Cor. ix. 5. and withal that what they did might be Matter of Bounty, not of Covetousness. No Reason but that of Covetousness can be rendered why a Person should not bear his Part of the necessary Charges of the Church proportionably to his Ability. Now a covetous Person, when known to the Church, is to be cast out from among them: 1 Cor. v. 11. *If any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, &c. with such a one no not to eat.* If a covetous Person is to be cast out, when discovered after he be received, by the same Reason he is to be kept out, if he do appear to be such before he is received.

4. He must Consent and agree to the Performance of all those relative Duties, that are incumbent on him towards

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wards his Brethren, as the Case requires; he must rebuke, exhort and comfort, and with a Spirit of Meekness restore such as are overtaken with a fault. That all these are the Duties of Members one towards another, I need give no Instance, they are so plainly stated in the Word.

5. He must consent and agree to submit to the Discipline and Government of Christ in his Church, and in case of Miscarriage to hear the Church speaking to him by the Word: For the Church hath no other Rule to go by, they may not make Laws of their own; nor is a Church-Censure to be valued or regarded if they have not a clear Foundation in the Word for what they do. There be three Things to be looked at in the Church-Censure. (1.) That the Matter of Fact do deserve a Censure, that it be such as may not be born with or indulged in the Church. (2.) That the Evidence be full and clear. And, (3.) That the offending Brother, after due Means used to reclaim him, remain Stubborn and Obstinate; *If he will not hear the Church, is to be as an Heathen Man, or a Publican.*

Well then, if a Man must be cast out that will not hear the Church: Is there not the same Reason to keep out him that will not Consent to hear the Church before he be received? I desire to know how the Church will deal with him, if he refuse to hear them after his being received, if they can receive him, though he refuse antecedent thereunto.

Secondly, The Church must consent and agree to receive such a one into their Communion and Fellowship, to enjoy all the Privileges of the Church which is the House of God, and to perform all those relative Duties towards him, that are incumbent on them by the Word. The Marriage must be mutual between the Church and each one, that is received a Member by them. *Thy Sons shall Marry thee, &c.* Isa. lxii. 5. Each Member must enjoy equal Privileges, and consent to the Performance of equal Duties, as the Case requires. There is no more Duty to be required of one Member towards another, than there is of that Member towards him, provided the Circumstances of each be alike; nor may a Member be debarred any one Church Privilege, unless by his disorderly walking he de-

bars himself; but each one should have the right Hand of Fellowship given unto him.

C H A P. VIII.

Containing the Bounds of an Instituted Church with respect to the Members thereof.

I COME now to handle the Bounds of an Instituted Church with respect to the Members thereof; who may be received in, who may be continued in: First, more generally. Secondly, more particularly.

First, More generally. The Word of God is the Bound: so far as the Word of God allows them, to remove their Stakes and to stretch out their Curtains, so far they may stretch them out, and no farther.

1. Then, baptized Disciples, someway instructed into the Discipline of the Church, are meet Matter to be joined to them (that is, regularly to be joined), though I would not hereby unchurch those Churches that are regular in respect of Matter and Form, where the Matter is visible Saints, and the Form is by mutual Consent, their Children being not brought into the Definition. But such as do bring Children in an Infant State to be Members of an Instituted Church, are not duly constituted neither in respect of Matter or Form. I say I would not unchurch such Churches that are duly constituted in respect of Matter and Form, and yet lie short of Light concerning the Mind of God. In this Matter, I look upon it as an Irregularity for a Person to offer himself to Communion antecedent to the taking up this Ordinance, or for Christians to embody together, antecedent thereunto; but every Irregularity doth not destroy the Essence of a Thing. The Essence of a Church lies in Matter and Form; and should we go about to put in Principles into the Description of a Church, I mean such Principles as do respect Matter of Practice, as well as Matter of Faith, I fear we might thereby unchurch more Churches, than we may

may be able to constitute aright. For instance, some Churches do look on singing of Psalms to be an Ordinance of God, and accordingly are in the Practice of it; must they be unchurched for owning that to be an Ordinance of Christ which others cannot receive? Why then had not the Church at *Jerusalem* been unchurched, for keeping up Circumcision after Christ was offered up, when Circumcision was abolished? Others are not for singing of Psalms, neither in Practice nor in Principle; must they be unchurched for want of this supposed Ordinance? Why then had not *Israel* been unchurched, who were without the Feast of Booths, or without that Ceremony of dwelling in Booths, in the Feast of the seventh Month, from the Days of *Joshua*, to the return from the seventy Years Captivity? *Nehem. viii. 17.* If not, Why must all those Churches be unchurched that lie short of their Duty in the Point of Baptism, merely for want of Light concerning the Mind of God in this Matter, provided there be the Essence of a Church in respect of Matter and Form? We have found this to be a disputable Point as well as singing, and it was long before many of us that now own it, were convinced of it. If it be plain to us now, so are all Things else to him that understands them; but it may be dark enough to others. I look on it to be an *Irregularity*, where Church Communion is held, *and the Members not baptized*; but not such Irregularity, as to make their Church-State a mere nullity: I have now made a long Digression, I shall return to the Point in Hand. I say, baptized Disciples, some way instructed in the Discipline of the Church, are meet Matter to be joined to an Instituted Church. It is Reason that those that are to share in the Government of the Church, should be made some way acquainted with the Rules thereof. There is teaching after baptizing as well as before; *teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you.* They should in some Measure be made acquainted with the Nature of the House of God, the goings in and the comings out thereof; they should be shewed the Forms and the Laws thereof. That such are regular Matter to be joined to an Instituted Church appears, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Go Disciple*

to me all Nations, Baptizing them, &c. teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you, &c. Now if we may read the Commands of Christ in Apostolical Precedents, then it is plain that this is one of Christ's Commands, that his Apostles were to teach the baptized Disciples to observe; *Acts ii. 41. Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized; and the same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.*

Secondly, They must be sound in the Faith.

But here some may object, *That if Persons are baptized upon a Profession of Faith, it is to be supposed that they are sound in the Faith, or else why are they baptized?*

I answer, I do not here handle the Bounds of a Church only with respect to the receiving Members, but also with respect to their abiding in the Church; after they are received. A Person that was judged sound in the Faith when he was first received, may afterwards be corrupted in his Principles, and become very rotten and unsound. *1 Tim. i. 19. Holding Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made Shipwreck. This I shall handle, first negatively; Secondly positively.*

i. Negatively, he must be free from Heresy: *Titus i. 10. He that is an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition reject.* Now an Heretick is one that chooseth to himself some Opinion that is directly contrary to some Fundamental plainly stated in the Word of the Lord. Every Error is not an Heresy; if it were, all Churches would soon be unchurched: For he that is an Heretick must be rejected after the second Admonition. I shall give a few Instances of Heresy.

(1.) He is an Heretick that denies the Trinity, that shall deny that there are Three in One, and One in Three: For there is nothing more plainly stated in the Word than this; *1 John v. 7. There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One:* He that denies the Trinity must deny either the Father, the Word, or the Spirit; and whatsoever of these is denied, there is a Foundation-Point in Religion denied. To deny the Son, is to deny that there

is a Redeemer; and to deny the Spirit, is to deny that there is a Sanctifier.

(2.) He is an Heretick that denies Jesus Christ in either of his Natures. To deny him in the Human Nature is to deny him in his Obedience, both active and passive, which is the Matter of that Righteousness by which we are justified. To deny him in the Divine Nature, is to deny him in the Merit of his Obedience. Now which ever of the Natures of Christ is denied, there is a Fundamental of Religion denied, and I do not stick to call it a damnable Heresy. 2 Pet. ii. 1. *But there were false Prophets among the People, as there shall be false Teachers among you, that shall privily bring in damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them.*

(3.) He is an Heretick that denies the Resurrection of the Dead. The Resurrection is a Foundation-Principle of Religion, and such a Foundation-Principle, that overturn this and overturn all. *For if there be no Resurrection from the Dead, then is not Christ risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain (saith the Apostle) and your Faith is vain, you are yet in your Sins. And we also are found false Witnesses, in that we have testified of God, that he hath raised Christ from the Dead, whom he hath not raised, if the Dead rise not again.* This is a Heresy that strikes at the whole Doctrine of the Gospel to overthrow it; for if the Apostles be found Liars in this, who can believe them in any thing?

2. Members must be free from Principles of Immorality, which lead to Immorality in Practice, or else they are not fit to be continued with in Communion. Revel. ii. 14. *I have a few Things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, that taught Balak to lay a stumbling-Block before the Children of Israel, to eat Things offered to Idols, and to commit Fornication. And thou hast them also there that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* These I think may also be ranked among Hereticks; However, they must be reformed or purged out, for when God brings a Charge against a Church, if they repent not, he will remove the Candlestick out of his Place.

26. I shall handle it positively. Such may be said to be found in the Faith, that are found in the Fundamentals of Religion. Now the Fundamentals of Religion may be brought into a narrow Compass: John xvii. 2, 3. *This is Life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Here are but a few Words, but they are very comprehensive; to know God is to know him in the Manner of his Subsistence, Three in One, and One in Three, Father, Son, and Spirit. It is to know him in his Attributes, in his absolute Sovereignty, his Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth, and the like. To know Jesus Christ is to know him to be the Mediator between God and Men; to know him in his Natures, that he is God and Man, two Natures united in one; Man, that he might do and suffer the Will of God; and God, that he might merit by doing and suffering.

To know him in his Offices, as he is considered, a Mediator, a Prophet, a Priest and a King, and that he is still in the Execution of his Offices; that he was dead and is alive, and behold he liveth for evermore; that he is exalted on the Right-Hand of God, and is become a Prince and a Saviour; that he ever liveth to make Intercession for us. We do not know Christ aright, as Mediator, unless we know him in all these respects: *For if he were on Earth, he should not be a Priest,* Heb. viii. 4. that is, he should not be that great High-Priest that God had promised; therefore to know him aright is to know him to be a Priest for ever. A Priest now, he is in Heaven, as well as he was when he was upon Earth; a Prophet for ever, and a King for ever. Now such as are found in these Fundamentals, I think may in a Gospel-Sense be said to be found in the Faith. There are few Principles in Religion, but what come under one or other of these Heads.

Object. But some may say, *That it is possible for a Man to own all this in Profession, and yet may hold some Errors, the consequence of which may be a denial of some one Branch or other of these Fundamentals.* For instance, He may profess that God is a just and righteous God, and yet deny that he hath discharged the Principal immediately upon Satisfaction

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made by the Society; this doth consequently deny his Justice. Is not such a one an Heretick?

I answer, in the negative. Heresy doth not consist in a consequential denying of some fundamental Truth, but in a direct denial thereof. Now, if that Truth that is consequentially denied, be professedly owned and maintained, that Person, though he be guilty of Error in what he denies, is not a Heretick thereby. For instance, to deny that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is to deny a fundamental Truth plainly stated in the Word; but to keep up the Observation of the Ceremonies of the Law, Circumcision, and the like, was a consequential denial that Christ was come in the Flesh; for if the Substance was come, the Shadows were ceased. Yet many of the Church of the Jews that did believe Jesus Christ was come, were zealous of all these, *Act. xxi. 21.* But never dealt with as Hereticks; nor was there ever such advice given by Paul, or any other Apostle. We must then have a care we do not go about to make Men Hereticks by consequence.

3^d. Church-Members must be such as are of a holy Conversation: If they live in Immoralities, and will not be reclaimed, they must be ejected; there must not be a wicked Man (that is, a Man who by his Conversation is known to be wicked) that must remain in a Church-state; *1 Cor. v. 13.* *Wherefore put away from among you that wicked Person.*

C H A P. IX.

Containing some Cautions to Churches concerning some Things that they had need to be aware of.

I HAVE shewed you the Bounds of an Instituted Church, with respect to the Members thereof. And Churches had need to be careful that they do not receive such as are not duly qualified for Communion.

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The first Thing then that I would caution Churches to beware of, is, *That they do not set the Door of the Sanctuary too wide*; we should take the Measure of the going in to the House as exactly as we should Measure the going out thereof. When the Man with the measuring Line in his Hand came to the Temple, *Ezek. iv. 12.* the first thing he measured was the Posts of the Door, the Sides, and the Breadth and the Height thereof. And when the House was to be shewed to the House of *Israel*, and the whole Fashion thereof, that they might measure the Fashion thereof, *Ezek. xliii. 10. 11.* He was to shew them the goings out thereof and the goings in thereof. So that we had need to take the just Measure of the Door by the Word, that it may not be too wide. If you ask me when the Door of the Sanctuary is too wide? I answer, when it lets in such as are not visible Saints, such as we have no ground to conclude, neither by their Profession nor Conversation, that there is any real change wrought in them. I would offer here a few Things to be considered.

1. Such cannot be said to be added by the Lord, and therefore not to be received by the Church. Such as are added by the Lord are such as shall be saved, *Acts ii. 47.* *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* They are not added according to the Lord's Prescription; *Psalm xxiv. 3. Who shall ascend into the Hill of God, and who shall stand in his Holy Place? He that hath clean Hands and a pure Heart, &c.* Such are the Worshipers that God seeks for.

2. Such as have no change wrought in their Hearts will be but little advantage to the Church when received: like a glass Eye in the Head, or a wooden Leg in the Body, there can be no spiritual Communion with them, whatever outward Communion there may seem to be. Did I say, like a glass Eye or a wooden Leg? Truly the Similitude is too high. A glass Eye, though it hath not a seeing faculty, yet it is for Ornament: But such Members are not an Ornament, but rather a Shame to the Church. The Body may rest on a wooden Leg, but there is no trust to be put to such Members as these.

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3. Such as have no Change wrought in them, may probably prove very prejudicial to the Church.

For (1.) They lie fearfully open to Temptations, having no spiritual Armour to defend themselves, if there be no real Change in them; they have not *put on the Breast-Plate of Righteousness, nor the Shield of Faith, by which the fiery Darts of the Devil may be quenched.*

(2.) There is a subtle and powerful Enemy to assault them, who will endeavour to make his Inroads into a Church by such as these. He will make his attempt where there is least resistance to be made. He entered into *Judas*, and put him upon betraying his Master; he baited his desire of gain this Way. He saw that he could play the Thief for Money, and now he tries whether he would play the Traitor for Money also, and accordingly it takes with him. He filled the Heart of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, to lie to the Holy Ghost.

(3.) Such have no one Corruption mortified, though possibly some Corruptions may be restrained for a Time. There being no Principle of Grace, there can be no such Things as a Work of Mortification begun in the Soul: And when Temptation is suited to unmortified Corruption, there is Danger that it will soon take.

(4.) In joining themselves to the Church, they do not join in Obedience to the Will of God, nor out of Love to the People of God, nor with any desire to answer the Ends of Church-Communion; for they have no Principle that leads to it, but some base Ends of their own, which Ends they will endeavour to pursue; and so by their Miscarriages, which they are not likely to be free from long together, they will fill the Hearts of those that are sincere with Grief, and their Hands with Work.

(1.) They will fill their Hearts with Grief, that there should be such Miscarriages among them, by which the Name of God is dishonoured, and the Ways of God evil spoken of. *Many walk, saith the Apostle, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the Enemies of the Cross of Christ; their God is their Belly, their Glory is their Shame, their end is Destruction, they mind earthly Things.* The Ways of God are evil spoken of, and Sinners

ners are prejudiced against them by such as these. This is Matter of Grief to the Godly.

(2.) The Churches Hands are like to be filled with Work, by the often Complaints that will be brought against them. It is not easy to get rid of such Members when once they are in, either for want of sufficient Witness, (for one Witness will not do) or from their feigned Repentance. Churches do sometimes groan a great while before they can get rid of such Members. And last of all, when they are cut off, that is with Grief too; though they be gangrened Members, yet there is trouble in separating them from the Body: 2 Cor. xii. 21. *I fear that when I come my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many that have sinned, and have not repented of their Uncleanness and Fornication and Lasciviousness, which they have committed.*

4. Consider, such as have no Change wrought in their Hearts, are in Danger of going out irregularly, and leaving their Place in the Church, either when they have served their Turn, and their base Ends are answered; or when they see they were mistaken in their Measures, and their Ends are never like to be answered. 1 John ii. 19. *They went out from us, but were not all of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out from us, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They were the Sons of Hagar, not of the free Woman, but of the bond.

Secondly, Churches had need beware that they do not keep the Door of the Sanctuary too close, and too narrow, making it too strait and too narrow, by clogging the Terms of Communion with unnecessary Things: They may not make that a bound of Communion that God never made a bound. If you ask me when the Door is too narrow, I answer, when the Terms of Communion are such, that Persons truly fearing God, and willing to come under the Discipline of Christ in his Church, are shut out.

1. Then Churches should not be too strict in Points of lesser concern, when Persons are found in Fundamentals and of a holy Conversation.

I have already shewed, that the Fundamentals of Religion in point of Knowledge are brought into a narrow Compals.

Compass. *This is life eternal, to know thee to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Here indeed is much comprized, as I have likewise shewed already. But it is possible that there may be some particular Principles held by some Churches, that a Person can see no ground for in the Word. For instance, some are of Opinion that it is the Duty of all baptized Believers to come under Imposition of Hands, and this is made one bound of Communion, and other Things that I could name; and no Communion to be had without submitting thereunto. Whether such Things are Duties or not, I shall not now determine. Yet I think they are a clog to the Conscience when they are made the Terms of Communion; and Conscience may be tried with it two Ways.

(1.) A Person may think it a Duty in itself, to come under Imposition of Hands, but not such as that the want of Light in it should block up the Way of all others; therefore though he could submit to it himself, yet he cannot do it under this Consideration.

(2.) There are others that are of the Judgment that it is no Duty, nor ever was to be performed to such an End as to form a Person a Member of a Church; no nor yet that it was or is a Duty for every baptized Believer, to come under Imposition of Hands to any End whatsoever, nor can he in Conscience submit to it: Tell me then whether such an Imposition does not bar the Door of the Sanctuary too close, I do not find such Impositions as these put into those Confessions of Faith, that stand on Record in the Word, nor any Thing but what is comprized in the Fundamentals of Religion. All the Confession that Peter made, Matt. xvi. 16. Was, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*; which Confession Christ commends, and tells him, *that Flesh and Blood had not revealed this to him, but his Father who was in Heaven*; and further declares, *Upon this Rock will I build my Church, not on Peter, nor on Peter's Faith, but on Christ so confest, who was the Object of Peter's Faith.* Here are but a few Words, but here is much comprized in them, here is Christ confest in both his Natures, and the Union thereof, thou who art the Son of Man art the Son of God; he is here confest in his Offices

Offices also, thou art Christ, he owns him to be the Anointed of the Lord: God's Christ and God's Anointed is the same Thing, *Psal. ii. 2.* Compared with *Acts iv. 26.* He that is *the Lord's Anointed* in the *Psalms*, is called *his Christ* in the *Acts*. Now as he is the Lord's Anointed, he is Prophet, Priest, and King: *Luke iv. 18.* *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the Gospel unto the Poor*, there is his Prophetical Office; *to proclaim Liberty to the Captives*, there is his Kingly Office; *and to open the Prison-doors, or to set at Liberty those that are bound*, there is his Priestly Office. And the Son is not only owned in his Natures, in his Offices; but the Father also, *the Son of the living God*; here is nothing in this Confession but what respects Fundamentals, nor was there more in the Confession of the Eunuch, *Acts viii. 37.* *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Nor do I think there was more in the Confession that was made by the three thousand, *Acts ii. 41.* Upon which they were baptized and added unto the Church. And I have these Reasons for it: (1.) Because Christ tells us, *that upon this Rock (that is upon Christ so confest, as Peter had confest him) he would build his Church.*

(2.) Because these new Converts had but little Time to be made acquainted with lesser Points of Divinity; the Substance of the Doctrine preached to them antecedent to their Conversion, is contained in the preceding Part of the Chapter, wherein the Fundamentals of Religion are declared in a great Measure; and it was upon the owning, receiving, and embracing that Doctrine, they were baptized and added to the Church. *Then they that gladly received the Word, were baptized, and the same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.*

2. Churches may not be too strict in enquiring into their Experiences, as to the particular Time and Means of their Conversion; possibly the Work may be carried on so gradually with some, especially with such as have been brought up in religious Families, that they may not be able to give a particular Account, and yet may be able to evidence the Truth of their Conversion.

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Some have known the holy Scriptures from their Childhood, and so their Change, as to Time and Means, is not so perceivable as others. Others it may be are but of little standing in Religion, and large Experience requires a large Time of standing in Profession, in Order to the attaining of it. What if the most that they can say in point of Experience be this, *They know that they were blind, now they see;* they were ignorant of Christ in his Natures, in his Offices; they could see no Beauty or Excellency in him, wherefore they should desire him: But now Jesus Christ is precious to them, precious in his Natures, in his Offices, in his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, precious in his Intercession. Is not this a Sign of Faith? 1 Pet. ii. 7. *To you that believe he is precious.* If they can experience that Sin was once loved and delighted in, but now they hate it; is not this a Sign of the Fear of God? Prov. viii. 13. *The Fear of the Lord is to hate Evil, &c.* If they can experience this, that the People of God that once they hated, are now become the Objects of their Love, is not this a Mark or Character of their being disciplined unto Christ? John xiii. 35. *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another.* The new Birth is certainly past on the Soul, where there is sincere Love to the Brethren.

3. No Miscarriage, either of a former or a latter Date, if truly repented of, may block up the Way to Communion. (1.) Not of a former Date, I mean such as precedes the Date of Conversion: 1 Cor. vi. 11. *Such were some of you, but ye are washed, &c.* What were they? I answer, *Fornicators, Adulterers, Effeminate, Abusers of themselves with Mankind, Idolators, Drunkards, Thieves.* These were great Immoralities, but being repented of, they were no Bar to Communion. (2.) If Miscarriages be of a later Date, since Conversion, if repented of, these may not block up the Way to Communion: Luke xvii. 3. *If he repent, forgive him.* If a Person that is in Communion be guilty of Miscarriages, and do indeed repent, he is not to be cast out. By the same Reason that one is not to be cast out, the other may not be kept out: The Incestuous Person being cast out, he was as if he had never been received in; yet upon Repentance was received again, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7.

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4. Indigency or Poverty may not block up the Way ; though the Church do foresee that such are like to be burdensome to them, they may not shut the Door against them to prevent it. The Lord hath made other Provision in this case ; he hath appointed Officers, Deacons, to look after the Poor, and Churches, according to their Abilities, are to relieve them, and should trust him who ministers Seed, and multiplies the Seed sown, for the increase of Abilities by which they may be able to relieve them, and take Encouragement from the Promise so to do. The Lord hath said, that *he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully* ; but he that will sow but sparingly can expect no other but to reap sparingly.

Thirdly, Churches had need beware, that they do not indulge Immoralities in them, nor in any one Member thereof.

1. Consider, Churches duly constituted in the first Place, may in Time grow negligent of their Duty, and may be too Indulgent in this particular ; that which hath been may be, but this hath been, therefore it may. The Church of *Corinth* let alone the Incestuous Person, did not bring him under dealing, till the Apostle rouseth them up to their Duty, by giving them a sharp reproof, charging them to put away from among them that wicked Person ; yet though they had such fair warning in this Case, and had been brought to a Sense of their Evil, and had been humbled under it, 2 Cor. vii. 8, 9, 10. *they sorrowed after a godly Sort* ; the Effect of which was Carefulness to please God, and Fearfulness to offend ; yet it was not long after before they fell into the same Miscarriage, and became guilty of the like Indulgence ; 2 Cor. xii. 20. *I fear, saith Paul, that when I come among you I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found of you such as you would not ; lest there be Debates, Backbitings, Whisperings, Swellings, Tumults, Envyings, Wrath, Strife*. Are not these Immoralities ? If this be not clear enough, read the next Verse ; *And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of their Uncleanness, and Fornication, and Lasciviousness, which they have committed*, What a heap of Im-

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pieties are there here committed and indulged? The Church of Pergamos likewise had such among them as held the Doctrine of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitans, such as were principled to Idolatry and Fornication, and that did endeavour to principle others.

2. It is an evil for Churches to indulge Immoralities, as it is a neglect of Duty and a breach of Rule. *If any Man be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolator, or a Drunkard, or a Railer, with such a one no not to eat: Put away therefore from among you that wicked Person, and purge out the old Leaven, that you may be a new Lump,* 1 Cor. v.

3. If Immoralities are indulged, God will have a Controversy with such Churches, sooner or later. *I have somewhat against thee* (saith God). It was this sinful Indulgence that God had to charge them with, *Rev. ii. 14.* Now if God does once commence his Action against a Church, he will go on with it; if he begin, he will also make an end, he will either reform or unchurch them. *Rev. ii. 5. Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of its Place, unless thou repent,* He calls upon every Church, against whom a Charge is brought, to repent. And when the Lord goes thus far, I am apt to think he will go farther, he will not spare one Church more than another; therefore it is good for him *that hath an Ear, to hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*

4. Immoralities indulged in a Church strike at the Essence and being of a Church, as the Essence is considered as the Matter of a Church. The Matter of a Church I have shewed already are visible Saints, such as in the judgment of Charity are inherently holy; but Immoralities indulged will soon destroy their visible Sanctity.

(1.) It strikes at the Essence of a Church in respect of the spreading and sowing Nature thereof. *Know you not,* saith the Apostle, *that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump?* There is no way to prevent its spreading, but by purging it out. Persons are in danger to leaven by evil Examples, though they are too backward in following that which is good. *Joseph being in Pharaoh's Court, had learned to swear by the Life of Pharaoh. Israel were mingled*

led among the Heathen, and they learned their Works, *Psal. cvi. 35.*

(2.) They strike at the Essence of a Church, in that the Church becomes relatively guilty thereby of the same Immoralities that are indulged by them. They cannot communicate with such as are known to be guilty of Immoralities, but they contract relative guilt thereby : *Hag. ii. 11, 12, 13. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, ask now the Priests concerning the Law, saying, If a Man bear holy Flesh in the Skirt of his Garment, and with his Skirt touch Bread, or Pottage, or Wine, or Oyl, shall it be clean? And the Priests said, no. Ver. 13. Then said Haggai, If a Man be unclean by touching a dead Body, and touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the Priests answered and said, it shall be unclean. Ver. 14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this People, and so is this Nation, saith the Lord; and so is every Work of their Hands: and that which they offer it is unclean.* In one kind or other the whole Nation were relatively guilty. Parallel with this is the Case of a Church where moral Evils are indulged. The Apostle exhorts the *Corinthians* to flee from Idolatry; the Argument with which he inforceth his Exhortation was this, *The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? and the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? for we being many are one Bread and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread. Behold Israel after the Flesh; Are not they who eat of the Sacrifice partakers of the Altar? What say I then, that the Idol is any thing, or that which is offered in Sacrifice is any thing? But this I say, that the Things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should have fellowship with Devils;* 1 Cor. x. 14.—21. Those that did join with the Gentiles in their Idol Worship, were guilty of their Idolatry: Though I do not think they designed to worship the Idol, yet they eating of the Sacrifice, were Partakers of the Altar. And such as did afterwards join with them in the Supper, were relatively guilty; for they being many, were one Bread, and one Body; the first were unclean by communicating with the Gentiles, and the second by communicating with them: Though they did not touch the dead
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Body themselves, yet they were unclean by touching him that did,

(3.) There is relative Guilt contracted by the Whole, in not exerting that Power Christ hath put into their Hands, either to reclaim or purge out such as are guilty. Those Immoralities will become the Evils of the Whole, though committed but by a Part, because indulged by the Whole; this Leaven will in this respect Leaven the whole Lump.

Fourthly, Churches had need beware that they do not receive Children into the Church, nor own them to be Members in an Infant State.

1. Consider there are many who I hope fear the Lord, that are perswaded, and do highly plead for it, that Children are Church-Members in an Infant State; this hath been a Bone of Contention among the People of God a great while, though those that maintain it are not yet agreed on the verdict, nor who shall speak for them. Some look on all Children to be Church-Members, whose Parents do verbally own Jesus Christ, though they give no Tokens of a Work of Grace on their Hearts, but the contrary. Others will put by Bastards: And a third Sort look on those only to be Church-Members, that are the Children of one or both Parents, who are in the Judgment of Charity true Believers. A fourth Sort look on those only to be Church-Members, whose Parents one or both are Members of an Instituted Church, that they and their Children are Members together; and they are so declared by the *Independents* and the *Presbyterians*, in the late uniting that was amongst them. Here are four Opinions, and but one Truth, therefore three of them are mistaken; and I doubt not but the fourth is mistaken also, and that this one Truth is not to be found among these four Opinions.

2. Some are hardly come to a Resolution, whether they are born Members, or whether they are made so by Baptism. Sometimes they bless God when a Child is sprinkled, that now there is another Member added to the Church; and sometimes they plead, that they are Church-Members, and therefore have a right to Baptism. I shall not now offer all that may be said against it, because it might be a repetition of what hath been written already; and therefore I refer the Reader to the third Chapter, and only

mention the Absurdities that follow this Principle, to be seriously considered.

1st. Such as receive Children into an Instituted Church, receive them to Communion with themselves, and yet do not allow them Communion in any one Church-Ordinance peculiar to the Church; nor have they more Communion with them than they have with those that are without, such as they themselves do look on as no Members. I speak of the strictest of them, such as take in no more than the Children of such as are Church-Members. As for Baptism, it is not an Ordinance of an Instituted Church, nor is it administred as such, that ought to be administred antecedent to Church-Membership. The Jaylor and his House were not Church-Members (that is, not of an Instituted Church) when they were baptised, nor yet the Eunuch, nor the three Thousand, *Acts* ii. 41. I cannot but look on this as an Absurdity, to receive them as Members, and not admit them to Communion with them in any Ordinance peculiar to the Church; seeing we have no precedent under the Gospel-Dispensation, of one Member that was ever debarred a Church-Ordinance, unless by his disorderly walking he gave the Church occasion to debar him, which must in such a Case be done by a Church-Censure: Now here is no Censure, no Communion. The whole Church, *Acts* ii. 42. *continued in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and breaking of Bread, and Prayer.* But what Fellowship hath any Church with these Infant Members? or what Fellowship can they have with them? I do not find one Member of the Church of *Corinth* debarred Communion with the Whole in the Supper; *1 Cor. x. 16, 17. The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? for we being many, are one Bread, and one Body, for we are all partakers of this one Bread.* How could the Apostle make good this, if all their Children had been a Part of that one Body, and not one of them permitted to take of that one Bread? either their Children did partake of that one Bread, or else they were no Part of that one Body.

A 2^d Absurdity is this; They are owned as Members

of the Church, but never brought under Dealing in their Childhood, whatever Miscarriages they are guilty of; they are Church-Members, but not brought under the Discipline of the Church; not one rule of Discipline laid down in the Word, that ever is observed or put in practice with respect to Children. What Church-Member ever concerned himself to go to them in private, and to tell them their Faults; and if they did not hear him, to take one or two with him; and if he did not hear them, to tell it unto the Church? Produce an Instance of one Church, that ever observed that Rule, with respect to these childish Members. Either they are no Members, or else Churches are altogether negligent of their Duty towards them. But grant they are no Members, yet Churches cannot plead not guilty, while they own them to be such, and yet not concern themselves with any of their Miscarriages; own them to be Members, and yet never deal with them as Members.

A 3^d Absurdity is this: They are never dealt with by the Church, when grown up to Years of Discretion; though never so prophane, Swearers, Drunkards, unclean Persons, they are never brought before the Church in order to be reformed or rejected, but remain Church-Members to their dying Day, if ever they were such. What a deal of Immorality is there then indulged in such Churches? If these be Church-Members, there is not only a little Leaven in such Lumps, but a great deal; it may be three Measures of Leaven to one Measure of Meal.

A 4th Absurdity is this: If God touch any of their Hearts with a Sense of their Duty, so as to desire Communion with the Church in the Supper of the Lord, they receive him after the same Manner as they would the Child of an Alien, or the Child of a Pagan. They must make a Confession of their Faith, give an Account of their Experiences, come under the same Engagements: But what need all this, or any of it, if they were Members of the same Church from their Infancy? He was never cast out, why must he now be received? What rule do you go by when you receive such as were Members before? Here is no Addition made to the Church by such as these. If you
say,

say, they are now added by the Lord: Then I would ask, by whom? the same Persons were added in their Infancy. The Lord adds none to the Church that were Members of the same Church before. Where do you ever read of a Person twice added to the Church, that was added before, and then added again, having not been cast out? I do not offer these Absurdities to shame those whose Principle and Practice it is, but to warn those who are at present free both in Principle and Practice, to be careful for the future that they remain free.

*Fi*rstly, Churches had need be careful they do not affect a Legislative Power, a Power of making Laws to govern by. There is the Principle of that old Corruption in us, that first began to work Mischief in the World. Men would be as Gods, rather govern than be governed.

1. Consider, there are a great many that profess themselves the Churches of Christ, that have too much affected this Legislative Power; some have grasped it into their Hands, as appears by those Volumes of Canon Laws that are extant, the Breach of which, if not each of them, exposes their Members to Excommunication. Others have striven after it, but through Mercy can not yet attain it.

2. To affect a Legislative Power, is to affect an Usurpation, I may say in respect of the Government of the Church in Ecclesiastical Affairs. *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, and he will save us.* In civil Things I grant the Magistrate hath a Legislative Power, and Churches as well as others are bound to obey them, and that for Conscience sake; but in Matters of Religion Conscience is immediately under the Kingly Office of Christ, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

3. There is no need for Churches to make Laws: Christ hath made enough to their Hand; there is no Case that can fall out, but there is some Rule or other reacheth that Case, some Law or other is suited to it; there is a Rule to deal with Hereticks, and a Rule to deal with immoral Persons, and also to deal with such as are idle and busy Bodies, that would eat the Bread of others for nought: The Church may withdraw from some, and they may reject others, so that Churches may very well content themselves with

with an executive Power, and not endeavour to be Legislators. Christ hath made better Laws already then ever Churches did or can make. It is true, Christ hath not made Laws to imprison the Body, nor yet to force Members to compound for their Offences for a Sum of Money; there are no Fees to be had by the Laws of Christ: but be it so, this shews it was never the Mind of Christ that Church-Members should be under, or that Churches should govern by such penal Laws.

4. If Churches make Laws to govern by, either they will be insignificant; or too significant; either they must have a Penalty annexed to them, or not. If not, then they are toothless Laws, then no Body will regard them; the Conscience they cannot bind, being merely humane. So that they will be altogether insignificant. And if there be a Penalty annexed, then they will signify too much; they will be as a Net woven to catch such as are conscientious, who cannot submit to any such Legislative Authority, without letting fall their Testimony to the Kingly Authority of Christ.

Object. But some may say, *that there were Decrees made by the Apostles and Elders at the Council held at Jerusalem, Acts xv. which Decrees were submitted to and received by the Churches, though no Penalty was annexed to them; Why then may not the Church make Decrees to be submitted to now?*

Answer, (1.) there was nothing positive enjoined by those Decrees, but some necessary Things to be abstained from, for the sake of others; which Abstinence was but *pro tempore*: for Moses in old Time in every City hath them that preach him, *being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath Day*, Acts xv. 21. This is rendered as the reason of it, which Reason was over when the Christians were separated from their Synagogical Worship, Acts xix. 9.

(2.) We find some of those Things which were not morally evil afterwards allowed, 1 Cor. viii. 4, 8. Chap. x. 25—29.

(3.) These Decrees were made by the Apostles and Elders, which Apostles were immediately inspired. They could say, *It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to Us*. This is no precedent for the Churches now to act by. It would be

be great Presumption now for a Church to make Decrees, and to say, *It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to Us.*

(5.) When such Laws are made that Christ never made, without doubt they will be prosecuted more strictly than the Laws of Christ will be. For Churches would not affect a Legislative Power, if they did not affect an Interest of their own. Did they design to promote the Interest of Christ, the Execution of his Laws would be the best Expedient to effect it; but they designing to promote their own Interest, the Execution of their own Laws, suited by their Penalties to answer that End, are the best Expedient to effect it.

C H A P. X.

Containing some Things by way of Caution to particular Members of the Church or Churches.

FIRST, each particular Member or Members had need beware they do not grow negligent in keeping their Place in the Church. But here, that I be not mistaken, I do not call every absence a Negligence; Persons may be providentially debared either by Sickness or Weakness, the Infirmities of old Age, or many other Ways, that yet would gladly be in their Place, could they attain it. I would here offer a few Things to be considered.

1. There is too much Negligence in many: This is evident by common Experience; Meetings would not be so thin as they are, if all were so diligent as some are. This may be spoken with grief; it is too evident that such Obstructions as would not block up the way to outward Advantage, do sometimes block up the way to a Church-Meeting. This is to me a great Argument of Negligence and Slothfulness, and that there is an Abatement *of the Kindness*

Kindness of their Youth, and the Love of their Espousals, some decay in their Zeal for God, and for his Worship.

2. Such as neglect their Places in the Church, are guilty of the Breach of Promise, and that of the most solemn Promise that ordinarily can be made; the Promise which they made in the Face of the Congregation, when they first sat down in Communion, to which the Lord himself is a Witness. Persons at their first embodying do solemnly engage to attend the Worship of God in his Church, as God by his Providence shall give them Opportunity. Who can absolve himself of his Promise, or plead *not guilty*, if Negligence be the Cause of his Absence? Will not the Lord take notice of this? *I remember thee, the Kindness of thy Youth, the Love of thine Espousals; in the Day thou followedst me in the Wilderness, Israel was Holiness to the Lord,* Jer. ii. 2, 3. And he doth also observe how negligent they were grown, and exostulates the Case with them, as you may see in the following Part of the Chapter.

3. The more Persons neglect their Places, the more they may; I do not mean by allowance from the Word, but with growing more hard than they were at first. It is much but Conscience will check them for the first neglect; but if it be not hearkened to, it will in Time grow weary of Smiting, and by Degrees grow dead to the Discharge of its Office, as Persons grow dead to the Discharge of their Duty. The way to keep Conscience keen and lively, is to hearken to it when it speaks. Yet observe, when Conscience gives off speaking, it will not be altogether idle. Conscience will keep a Register of your Negligence, and will have a Time to speak again; it will lay your Miscarriages before you, it may be as far down as the Sins of your Youth: And such as would not hearken to the Checks of Conscience, may possibly come to feel the Smart of a wounded Conscience, and find it a Burden too heavy for them to bear. *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmities, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii.

4. Persons do greatly prejudice themselves by the Neglect of their Place.

(1.) They slip and lose an Opportunity for Communion with God, the Enjoyment of whom is the highest Enjoyment: *The Lord dwells in Sion; he walketh in the midst of the*

the golden Candlesticks; there the Lord is to be seen, there his Beauty is to be beheld: *Psal. xxvii. 4.* That made David so desirous to dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of his Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple. He could not have such a sight of God as in the Sanctuary; and this sets his Soul a longing, *Psal. lxi. 2.* that he might see him, as he had seen him in the Sanctuary. Did not the Spouse slip an Opportunity for Communion with her Beloved, when he stood calling with the most pathetical Expressions, till his Locks were wet with the Dew of the Night? and she excuses herself upon the account of her Drowsiness and Slothfulness, not rising up to open to him, till her Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. God hath promised to meet his People in the Ways of his own Appointment: *Isa. lxiv. 5.* Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh Righteousness, that remembereth thee in thy Ways, O God. Such a meeting is both profitable and pleasant. (1.) It is profitable; if God meet you, he will bless you: *Where I record my Name, there will I meet you, and there will I bless you, Exod. xx. 24.* (2.) It is pleasant; *I sat under his Shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was sweet unto my Taste, Cant. ii. 3.*

(2.) It is prejudicial, in that the Means neglected is the Food of the Soul. Let a Person neglect his bodily Food, and he will soon grow lean; such neglect their Food, their spiritual Food. There is the sincere Milk of the Word, by which a Soul may grow: There is Food for every Faculty of the Soul, and every Grace of the Spirit to feed upon. *Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my Heart, Jer. xv. 16.* How many Words are dropt that might have been of Advantage for quickening and for comfort, that you lose the Benefit of, by your Absence? It was not a little Damage that Thomas sustained by being absent from that Evening's Meeting, when Christ came in the Midst of them, and said, *Peace be unto you*: The Ten had all their Doubts removed as to the Resurrection of Christ, their Faith raised up to believe it, and their Souls comforted in it; but Thomas was not with them. And now he could not receive the Report at second Hand, though there were Ten Wit-

nesses

nesses to attest the Truth of it; he seems now to be as much confirmed in his Incredulity, as the others in their Faith.

5. It is a bad Sign that such as are negligent in their Places, have but a little Enjoyment of God (at least sensible Enjoyment of him) when they are in them. They would surely be more desirous of the sincere Milk of the Word, had they any considerable Taste of the Goodness of *Jehovah*: Had they much sensible Enjoyment of God in his Ordinances, it would keep up Life and Power in the Things of God; this would set their Souls a longing after the Means, that so they might enjoy more of God; *Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. My Soul thirsteth for God, yea longeth that I might see thy Power and thy Glory, as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary.* The more we see of God, the more do we long after him. It was long before the Spouse rose up to open to her Beloved; yet when she came to the Door, and her Hands dropt with Myrrh, and her Fingers with sweet-smelling Myrrh upon the Handles of the Lock, then she longs after him; but her Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. When he put in his Hand by the Hole of the Door, her Bowels were moved for him, and then she rose up to open to him; and having a Scent of the sweet-smelling Myrrh that he had conveyed in by the Hole of the Door, she could not be at rest till she had the Enjoyment of him; *she sought him, but she found him not; she called him, but he gave her no answer.* At length she breaks out and discovers her great Affection by the ardency of her desire: *I charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem if ye see my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of Love.* Some sensible Tastes of the Goodness of God set the Soul a longing after God. You see how *David* breaths after him; *Psal. xlii. 1, 2. As the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee O God. When shall I come and appear before God?* And he renders this as the Reason, *Ver. 4. For I had gone with the Multitude, I went with them to the House of the Lord, with the Multitude of them that kept Holy-day: He went with them, with the Voice of Joy and Praise; and the Remembrance of these Things made him to pour out his Soul within him.*

6. Consider, Negligence of your Place is that which strikes

strikes at the Essence of a Church, the Essence being considered as the Form thereof. The Church is a spiritual House. Now a House consists of Matter and Form, and it receives the Denomination of a House from its Form. Take the Materials asunder, and it is no House: If every Member should neglect their Place as some do, the House would soon be demolished.

7. Negligence of your Place hath in it a neglect of the End of Church-Constitution: The End of a Church-State is, that God may be worshipped by an incorporated Body, in a peculiar Way from what he is worshipped by others: 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye also as lively Stones are built up a spiritual House, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ.* The End of Church-Communion Persons should have in their Eye when they give up themselves each to other; and this should still be minded by them, as long as they stand in a Church-State, that they might bring those Offerings that God calls for, *come into his Courts and worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness, and give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name.* If Members neglect their Places in the Church, they keep back from God his due: In this respect there are a great many indebted to God.

But here it may be enquired, *What is to be done in case Members are negligent in this Matter?*

I answer, (1.) They should be privately admonished by their Brethren, they should enquire into the Reason of their Absence, and exhort them to their Duty, that Negligence become not habitual unto them: Heb. iii. 13. *But exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.* Sin is of a deceitful Nature, and it may cheat Men by degrees, to the indulging themselves in the neglect of their Duty. This is one Remedy that God hath provided; Heb. x. 15. *Not forsaking the assembling of your selves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another, &c.* If each Member would observe who were wanting, and would, as they live near, enquire into the cause of their Absence, and admonish them to their Duty where Negligence appeared, we might expect a Blessing upon it, because it is a way of God's own appointing; but those private Exhortations are too much wanting.

(2.) If

(2.) If this will not take, the Church must deal with them; and if the Case be apparent Negligence, and the Person remain obstinate, and will not hear the Church, acknowledge his Evil, and endeavour Reformation, the last Remedy is to reject.

Now there are three Things on which the Church may proceed.

1. Their breach of Promise, which was solemnly made when they first entered into Communion. It is *he that speaketh the Truth from his Heart, that shall abide in this holy Hill, Psal. xv. 1.* If Men will not be perswaded to keep their Promises, when it is in their Power so to do, can they be supposed to speak the Truth from their Hearts when they first made them?

2. Neglect of Duty unto God. That negative Precept, *Heb. x.* implies a positive Duty; *Not forsaking the assembling of your selves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another, &c.* What should they exhort each other to, but to assemble and meet together to worship God, to keep their Places in the Church? It is their Duty to bring an Offering, to come into his Courts, to worship the Lord in the Beauties of Holiness. All the Worship that God hath appointed to be performed in an Instituted Church, is a Glory due to his Name; and such as live in the neglect of it, do keep back that from God which is his due.

3. Obstinacy, in that they do not, nor will not hear the Church when all due Means have been made use of to reclaim them: If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a Heathen Man, or a Publican.

Secondly, Members had need beware that they be not negligent of their Duty of private Admonitions in Case of private Offences, known only to one or to a few, not yet made publick.

1. Consider, there is too great a neglect of this Duty; this is evident by Experience, and there is no other way to evidence it by. It is rare for Members to discharge this Duty as it ought to be.

2. There is a double Evil that doth commonly follow the neglect thereof. (1.) The Miscarriage observed doth not die in the Breast of him that observed it, there is vent

one way or other: Though he tells it not to him that hath given the Offence, to whom he is bound in Duty and Conscience to declare it; it is much but it shall be told to others, from whom he ought to conceal it, and so it is handed from one to another, till it may be it takes air in the World: This is a declaring it to the reproach of thy Brother, when it should have been told to him for his Recovery. I cannot but think they were such as these that the Apostle calls *Whisperers, Backbiters*, such as will whisper in the Ear of one and another: And it is true, say they, but I would not have my Name brought in question by any Mean. What is this but Backbiting as well as Whispering; when a Person can bring his Brother's Name in question to his Disgrace, but is tender of his own, that nothing may reflect on himself. But here some may ask, what may be a proper Remedy or Cure of this Distemper? I answer, In case one Member should make it known to another, that hath not dealt with his Brother in private, that Member should deal immediately by the same Rule with him, lay his Fault open before him, shew him wherein he lies short of his Duty to his Brother, in not dealing with him in private, and likewise his evil in scandalizing his Brother, by Discovering it to his reproach; and unless he acknowledge his evil in whispering and backbiting, and go and deal with his Brother according to rule, he is to take one or two more with him; and if he neglect to hear them, he should tell it unto the Church. And if this Course were constantly taken, I doubt not but there would soon be an End of whispering and backbiting.

(2.) Another Evil that commonly follows the neglect of this Duty is this, It shall it may be lie in the Breast of him that observed it, as Fire under Ashes, till there be Occasion to open it again by some new Difference that may arise, and then it shall be blown up into a Flame, and the Sparks thereof shall fly out to the reproach of thy Brother; this is unbecoming a Church-Member.

3. Consider, your Brother is injured hereby; possibly he may be hardened in his Evil, seeing it will pass without a Reproof; whereas if thou hadst dealt with him according to Rule, he might have been won thereby to a Sense

of his Evil, and made more careful for the future. *If he bear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother*; and this would be Advantage to both. *He that converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, shall save a Soul from Death, and cover a Multitude of Sins*, James v. 20. He that is here called a Sinner, is called a Brother in the preceding Verse; Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him: which respects not the first Work of Conversion, but his Recovery from a Relapse, such a Conversion as Christ speaks of to Peter, Luke xxii. 32. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren*. Such a Conversion will hide a multitude of Sins, as it puts a stop to Sin, and prevents the breaking out of Sin for the future; this will be good Service done for God, and for your Brother also, and you yourselves shall not lose your Reward.

4. Consider it is a Sign of little Love to thy Brother, if this Duty be neglected: *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart, thou shalt in any wise reprove him, and not suffer Sin upon him*, Lev. xix. 17. It is a greater Sign of Hatred than of Love, where Persons can suffer their Brethren to go untold of their Miscarriages.

5. The neglect of this Duty is a Breach of as plain and positive a Command, as any laid down in the Word; Matt. xviii. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, tell him his Fault between thee and him alone; if he bear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother; but if he will not bear thee, take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church*. You have not done your Duty in case of Obstinacy, untill you have gone these three Steps. I am much perswaded if this Rule was carefully observed, and wisely put in practice it would be one of the best Expedients that can be proposed to promote a flourishing State of the Church. But here you will ask, how this Duty is to be performed with respect to Time, and Place, and Manner?

I answer; As to Time there must be no Delay: The first Opportunity to remove Sin must be taken, it is of greater concern than Things of another nature. *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart, thou shalt in any wise reprove him, and shalt not suffer Sin upon him*.

As to the Place, it must be private: *Tell him his Fault between*

between him and thee alone, no Body in the World should hear it; and if thy Brother be gained, the Matter of fact should die in thy own Breast, it should never be published to others, for that may tend to the reproach of thy Brother whose Credit and Reputation thou art bound to preserve as carefully as thy own. It may also make some Alienation in Affection, and so in Time prove prejudicial to thy self and thy Brother too; thou wilt by publishing of it expose thy self to be dealt withal; for one end of this private Dealing is the concealing of the Miscarriage. It may also prove a great Provocation to thy Brother, and cause him to suspect thy Love to him, that thou didst not design his good as thou pretendest.

And as to the Manner of this Reproof,

(1.) It must be done authoritatively, in the Name of Jesus Christ; you have Commission from Christ so to do. He commands you to do it, and he will own you in it, it is your Lord's Message that he sends you in.

(2.) It must be done tenderly and meekly, with the greatest Manifestation of Love that possibly may be, that thy Brother may see thou designest his good: Gal. vi. 1, *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken with a Fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering lest thou thy self also be tempted.*

Thirdly, Members had need beware of a hasty, heady Separation from a Church duly constituted, either by a partial withdrawing of their Communion, or a total departure and quitting their Place in the Church.

1. Consider there is too much of this hasty heady Separation; Churches have Experience of it: There are two Cases wherein if Persons do withdraw I cannot but look on it as hasty and heady. (1.) When Persons take Offence at one another, though possibly there was none justly given, (but whether it were or not, it is much the same) and presently withdraw their Communion with the Church, before any Means are used in order to obtain Satisfaction, the bringing his Brother to the Sense of the Evil, or the Church being made acquainted with it, that so the Matter may be enquired into. It may be he comes to his Place again when his Stomach is a little down, without seeking

or receiving Satisfaction. This I call a hasty heady Separation; here is Guilt contracted at one Hand or other, but none acknowledged. And Persons do by taking their Place again, without seeking Satisfaction, condemn themselves, as guilty of acting irregularly in their withdrawing. If there were just Cause given, there should be a sensible Acknowledgment of it, before a Person can regularly hold Communion with them that gave it. If not, he that doth irregularly withdraw, should sensibly acknowledge the Irregularity of his withdrawing, before he take his Place again in the Congregation. Churches should look into these Things, and deal with Members for such Irregularities. (2.) When Persons have espoused a Notion in Religion which is dubious, and they themselves cannot clear it, nor answer all Objections brought against it, nor resolve those Doubts that may be offered in the Case; presently, because the Church cannot comply, there is a Separation made. This I account heady and hasty, there being no Rule I can find that warrants it.

2. Consider, it is an evil to separate from a Church that is rightly constituted, unless there be such grounds of Separation given, as a Person cannot hold his Communion, but he must contract relative Guilt; otherwise his Separation will be a Schism in the Body. It is not a light thing to make a Rent in the Church, woeful Experience hath taught us this Lesson.

3. The withdrawing or separating of some Members, may endanger the unchurching of those that are left behind. I may allude here to the Passage of Paul, Acts xxvii. 31. *Except these Men abide in the Ship, you cannot be saved.* They were the Mariners that had Skill in guiding and steering the Ship. There are some Members that have more Skill in ordering and governing in the Church than others have, that are more capable of reforming what is amiss; if they should hastily separate, there is Danger what may become of those left behind.

4. All Separation antecedent to the utmost Endeavour of Reformation is irregular; there is a Charge brought against several Churches in Scripture, for Corruptions that were found among them, and still a Reformation is called for.

But

But I do not find one Instance where a Separation is called for. In the first Place, that which God calls for is Repentance, in which there is a Reformation: If Churches be leavened, care must be taken to purge it out. If there be a wicked Person discovered in the Church, the Charge is, *Put away from among you that wicked Person.*

Object. The Lord calls for a Separation: 2 Cor. vii. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, &c.*

I answer, This was not a Separation from a Church duly constituted, but from Idolaters, such as did sacrifice to Devils, and not to God. Some of the Church of Corinth were too guilty of joining with the Gentiles in their Temple-worship, and they are called upon to come out, and to be separate.

Object. 2. But some may say, *Is there no Case then wherein Persons may separate from a People that were once duly constituted a Church?*

I answer there is, When they cannot longer abide among them, but they must contract relative Guilt, or live in a constant and continual Omission of their known Duty and be utterly debarred the Privileges of a Member.

(1.) Then if moral Evils be indulged in the Church, so that a Church will by no Means be prevailed with to bring the Guilty under dealing in order to reform them or remove them; a Person having discharged his Duty, and done what in him lies to promote a Reformation, if it cannot be attained, it is lawful to separate, and a Duty also. 1 Cor. vi. 11. *With such a one no not to eat;* that is a Person guilty of Immoralities, a Fornicator, a Covetous one, an Idolater, a Drunkard, a Railer: The Charge is here laid upon the whole Congregation, and it reacheth every Individual though each Individual cannot perform every positive Duty that is enjoined, because some Duties cannot be performed in the Church, but by the Church collectively considered; but such negative Duties as these may, and must be observed by each individual Member. If such then are known to be in the Church, and the Church will keep them in, whatever Complaint may be made against it, the whole Lump that maintains the Communion of such Persons, is leavened.

leavened. And a Person cannot hold Communion with such a Church, but he must contract relative Guilt; he hath no way to keep himself pure, but to withdraw from her; he must not touch the unclean thing, which he cannot avoid, if he continue his Communion with such as are morally unclean.

(2.) If Heresy be indulged in the Church, it is the same thing; this also is Leaven, though of a differing Nature from the former. It is that which the Church ought to purge out; Titus i. 10. *He that is a Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, reject.* But if the Church will indulge them, and still hold Communion with them, it is time for a Person to separate from such a Church. The Apostle tells you, *their Words will eat as a Canker* (or as a Gangrene, Margin) 2 Tim. ii. 17. We know what danger the Body is in if once it begins to gangrene in a Part. Hymeneus and Philetus were some of these Hereticks, that held that the Resurrection was past; and their Words did eat as a Canker, to the overthrowing of the Faith of some.

(3.) If the Form of a Church be destroyed, Meetings laid down when there is a Liberty to keep them up; the Elder die, and no care taken to choose another; Ordinances not administered; the Laws of Christ not put in Execution; no looking after the Members, nor calling them to an Account in any Case; and all Means have been used by some to stir them up to their Duty, and they have waited till there be no Grounds of Hope remaining: If others will starve, must they starve too? Wherefore should a Person abide with those that call themselves a Church, when there is not the Face of a Church to be seen among them, and the End of Church-Communion can not possibly be answered for the present, nor is like to be for the future, that is, that God may be worshiped according to his own Appointment, by an incorporated Body? But still remember, whatever the Case is, all due Means must be used for Reformation, before there should be a Thought of Separation. See what you can do towards the saving of the ship, before you think of leaping out to save your selves. Separation is the last Remedy, and not to be used till all other Means do fail.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Members had need beware, that their Love do not decay and abate towards God, nor one towards another.

1. Consider, Love in Church-Members may be abated: There was a Charge against the Church of *Ephesus*, that *she had left her first Love*, Rev. ii. Possibly it was her Love to God that was left, which is the Love principally here intended; but be it so, if Love to God be abated, I doubt not but there will be Abatement of Love one to the other also. Experience doth witness the Decay and waxing cold of Love one to another; the Want of the Effects of Love does sometimes declare it, when there is but little bearing with and forbearing one another.

2. If there be a Decay of Love, it is much but there will be a Decay of Duty too, toward the Object or Objects of that decayed Love. The Lord charges the Church of *Ephesus*, who had left her first Love, *To remember from whence she had fallen, and repent, and do her first Works*. Love is a Spring of motion to the Soul; If the Spring be weak, the Motion will be weak: It doth in Part consist in a Propensity to be serviceable to the Object beloved: Little Love, little Service.

3. Consider, it is an Evil, as it is a neglect of Duty to God: Few Duties are oftener inculcated on Christians than this of Love. *See that you love one another, with a pure Heart fervently. Love as Brethren. Let brotherly Love continue. Walk in Love, as Christ also loved us*. There was no Decay in Christ's Love. *Having loved his own that were in the World, he loved them to the End*. His Love was great, he loved us and laid down his Life for us, and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren.

There are excellent Properties in Love; It will bear and forbear, Eph. iv. 2. *It suffereth long and is kind, it envieth not, it vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; it beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things; and besides all this, it covers a Multitude of Sins*: It will readily apply a Plaister, where there is a Wound. And is it not great pity that there should be any Decay of Love

seeing

seeing there are such excellent Properties therein, and especially being so often prest by the great God to keep it up, and to maintain it? We have a new Command for it and an old Command; it is a Duty that was enjoined from the Beginning, the Love of Christ is held forth as the Pattern of it; we are bid to love, as Christ loved us. And it is also held forth as the reason of it; *If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

4. The Decay of Love in Members towards God and one another, is the fearful Fore-runner of the Downfal of a Church, *Rev. ii.* This was that the Church of *Ephesus* was charged with, *Thou hast left thy first Love:* Then follows an Exhortation to *repent*, and to do her *first Works.* This Exhortation is backed with an astonishing Argument, *Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of its Place, except thou repent.* God threatens to unchurch them, and that quickly. This I call an astonishing Motive: I look on it to be a heavy Stroke upon a People, when God unchurcheth them: The Lord doth in some respect remove his Presence from a People when he removes the Candlestick; he pulls down the House that he was said to dwell in; the Glory of the Lord removes: and may we not say, Wo be unto us if God depart from us? Go to Shilo, said God, *Jer. vii. 12. the Place where I set my Name at the first, and see what I did to them.* And it were meet for us to go to Shilo also, and take a view how God dealt with them. Some account you have, *Psal. lxxviii. 60. He forsook the Tabernacle of Shilo, the Tent which he had pitched among Men, and gave his Strength into Captivity, and his Glory into the Enemy's Hands; he gave his People also over unto the Sword, and was wroth with his Inheritance.* When the Lord bids them go to Shilo, and see what he did to them, *Jer. vii.* he threatens them at the same Time that he would do to them as he had done to Shilo. The Manner of God's unchurching a People is very terrible to consider; some brief Account we have of it, *Isa. v. 6. And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard: I will take away the Hedge, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there*

there shall come up Briers and Thorns. I will also command the Clouds that they rain no Rain upon it. This was the Manner of God's unchurching his People of old, Love among the Members of a Church, is somewhat like the Braces of a House, that hold the Building together; if the Braces decay, the Building is in danger of falling; So if Love decay among the Brethren, there will be but little bearing and forbearing one another, every thing will be taken in the worst Sense; instead of covering or hiding of Sin, there will be a laying open of Miscarriages, with all the Aggravations imaginable, to reproach each other: Differences will not easily be made up, but remain it may be till they become incurable, and from Divisions come to a Separation; and so the Church falls piece-meal, till at length the Candlestick is quite removed out of its Place: And we may expect Misery enough of one kind or other, that will follow the Removal thereof, if the Lord deal with us as he hath dealt with others, whose Candlestick hath been removed out of its Place.

C H A P. XI.

Containing one Mark or Character, by which a Person may try whether he be meet Matter, in order to join himself to an Instituted Church, or not.

TRY then whether you be discipled to Christ or no. Churches are Disciples, and are so called in Scripture, they must not receive any but such as are discipled. When *Paul came to Jerusalem, Acts ix. 26.* he assayed to join himself with the Disciples (that was the Church) and they were all afraid of him, and would not believe that he was a Disciple; nor did they receive him till Satisfaction was given, when the first Day of the Week was come, on which the Disciples came together to break Bread; the Disciples here were the Church, *Acts xx. 7.* Disciples are fit Matter to be baptized, and then added unto the Church

Church; *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Go disciple to me all Nations, baptizing them, &c. teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you.* The joining of baptized Disciples to an Instituted Church, is one of Christ's Commands plainly to be read in Apostolical Precedents, *Acts ii. 41. Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized.*

1st. They were disciplined, then baptized, thus far they did as Christ had commanded them. *And the same Day there were added unto them* (that is the Church) *about three thousand Souls.* And had not this been one of Christ's Commands also, the Apostles would not have done it, for they were strictly enjoined to teach them to observe all Things whatsoever Christ had commanded them; they must not add nor diminish. Now a Disciple of Christ is one that hath learned Christ, and so learned him, as to deny himself for Christ; *John vi. 45. Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to me.* It is observed by those that understand the Greek, that the Word that is here translated *learned*, signifieth *discipled*; and this learning or discipling of the Father must be unto Christ, because the Soul that is thus learned presently closeth with or cometh unto Christ; which coming is the Act of the Will, and this cannot be antecedent to the Act of the Understanding; a Man must know Christ, or he cannot come to Christ. Your Work then will be first to enquire whether you do know Jesus Christ; whether you do know him in his Natures, God and Man, two distinct Natures united in one; whether you do know him in his Offices, Prophet, Priest and King. But here some may say, they do know Christ in his Natures, in his Offices, and can discourse of Christ distinctly in all these respects, and can prove each Part by the Word.

But how shall I know whether this be special or common Knowledge, such as Flesh and Blood hath revealed, or whether it be revealed by the Father? I answer, try the Act of the Understanding by the Act of the Will: *Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me, saith Christ, John vi. 45.* Are you come to Jesus Christ? If
K
you

you are, you may conclude that you are taught of God, that you are learned of the Father. Have you made a Resignation of your Souls to Jesus Christ, to be taught, saved and governed by Him? Christ must be received in all his Offices, with respect to the several ends of all those Offices.

1. Then, do you consent that Christ shall be your Prophet to teach you? He is that great Prophet that God hath raised up to that End. Are you willing to take out every Lesson that Christ teacheth? It is such a one that is indeed a Scholar of Christ; *Him shall you hear in all Things whatsoever he shall say unto you, Acts iii.* If Men will pick and choose, and skip over a hard Lesson as an intolerable Task to learn, they are but Disciples in shew, not in deed, *John vi. 60.* When they heard that they must eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of Christ, or they had no Life in them, they concluded that this was a hard saying, that there were none could bear it; and from that Time many of his Disciples went back and followed him no more: These were but Disciples in shew. A Disciple in deed, is one that will endeavour to take out every Lesson that Christ teacheth: He can pray, *That which I know not teach thou me.*

2. Do you take Christ to be your Priest, to save you? Do you apply the Righteousness of Christ, with a Renunciation of your own Righteousness? Can you say with the Apostle, *I would not be found in my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but in the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith in Jesus Christ?* It is the Nature of Faith to evacuate and empty the Soul of every Thing of its own, and to carry the Soul out of itself to receive all from Christ. True Faith sets the Crown upon the Head of Free-grace, and the Righteousness of Christ alone. I would not frustrate the Grace of God, saith *Paul*; *for if Righteousness came by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. ult.*

3. Do you take Christ to be your King, to rule and govern you? Do you, or are you willing to put your Neck under the Yoke of Christ's Laws, and to yield universal Obedience thereunto? That Soul that doth not receive Christ as a King, doth but deceive himself, if he thinks he doth

doth receive him as a Priest; for he is an Enemy unto Christ, whatever he may pretend. *These my Enemies*, saith Christ, *that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me*, Luke xix.

2ly. A Disciple of Christ is one that hath so learned Christ, as to deny himself for Christ: Luke xiv. 27. *Except a Man hate Father and Mother, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple; and unless he take up his Cross and follow me, he cannot be my Disciple.*

There is a threefold Self-denial, a denial of sinful Self, of natural Self, and of religious Self. First of sinful Self, which must be denied at all Times, in all Places, and in all Cases; 2 Tim. ii. 19. *He that nameth the Name of Christ, must depart from Iniquity.* We may not do evil that good may come thereby. Natural Self must be denied, Self-Riches, Self-Honour, Self-Liberty, Self-Life: But this Self-denial is only to be made, when any or all of these shall come in Competition with Christ. Religious-Self must also be denied, with all our own Righteousness, all our Duties and Performances, all our Qualifications, all Acts of Obedience internal and external; but this Branch of Self-denial must be in point of Justification only: We must lay all at the Feet of Christ, and rest upon him alone, in respect of our discharge from Guilt, and our title to Life and Glory.

3ly. It is a mark of a Disciple of Christ, where there is true Love to the Brethren. *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*, John xv. 30. If others may know by this mark that you are Christ's Disciples, you also may know it by the same.

C H A P. XII.

Containing some Branches of Consolation to such as are Disciples in deed, and also joined to an Instituted Church.

FIRST, Such are added by the Lord; Acts ii. 42. *The Lord daily added to the Church such as should be saved.* Disciples in deed are such as shall be saved, they are such as continue in the Word; and we know that he that continues to the End, the same shall be saved, Matt. x. 22.

1. You are added by the Lord, as being added by the Lord's Description: Psal. xxiv. 3. *Who shall ascend into the Hill of God? who shall stand in his Holy Place? He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart.* Now a Disciple in deed is such a one.

2. You are come into the Sheepfold by the Door of the Fold; you are come to Christ, and so are come in at the right Door, and shall go in and out and find Pasture.

3. It is the Lord himself that hath disposed your Spirits by writing his Law in your Hearts, and putting it in your inward Parts, according to the New-Covenant Promise, Jer. xxxi. 33. Which is not a ruling, but a dispositive Law, which doth dispose the Soul to come up in Obedience to his Laws that are contained in his Word. It is the Lord that hath inclined your Hearts, and excited you by his Spirit to join yourself to the Church, in Obedience to his Commands. In all which respects you may be said to be added by the Lord; and now you stand where God hath set you.

Secondly, You are Blessed ones; yea and you shall be blessed.

1. You are blessed; Psal. lxxxiv. 5. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy House, they shall still praise thee.* There are three Things in Blessedness: (1.) It consists in the bestowing of good; *Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord imputeth Righteousness without Works*, Rom. iv. 5. *Blessed is he in*
whose

whose Spirit there is no Guile, Psal. xxxii. 3. You that are Disciples indeed, are blessed in both these respects; you are justified, you are sanctified. (2.) It consists in the remitting of evil: *Blessed is the Man whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sin is covered; blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin*, Rom. iv. 6, 7. You are blessed in this respect, your Sins are pardoned. (3.) It consists in turning evil into good: Mat v. *Blessed are ye when Men revile you and persecute you, and say all Manner of evil against you. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.* You are also blessed in this respect, for you are of the Number of those that have the Promise, that all Things shall work together for good to them.

2. You shall be blessed. Psal. xxiv. 3. *Who shall ascend into the Hill of God, and who shall stand in his holy Place? He that hath clean Hands and a pure Heart: He shall receive the Blessing from the Lord, and Righteousness from the God of his Salvation.* Psal. lxxv. 4. *Blessed is the Man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy House, even of thy holy Temple.*

Thirdly, You are capable of enjoying the highest Communion with God that is to be enjoyed on this side Heaven, the Enjoyment of whom is the highest Enjoyment.

1. You are capable of the highest Enjoyment of God. You dwell where God dwells, you dwell in his House; Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. *The Lord hath chosen Sion, he hath desired it for an Habitation; there will I dwell for ever, for I have desired it.* The Church of Ephesus were builded together for a Habitation of God through the Spirit; there is no such sight of God as in his House. How did David long to see God, as he had seen him in the Sanctuary? Psal. lxxiii. 2. *And to dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of his Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple?* Psal. xxvii. 4.

2. They sit at God's Table. Who are like to have Communion one with another, more than they that dwell in one House, and sit together at one Table? *While the King sitteth*

sitteth at the Table, my Spikenard sendeth forth its smell. My Beloved is to me as a Bundle of Myrrh, Cant. i. 12, 13.

2ly. The Enjoyment of God is the highest Enjoyment: *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on Earth that I desire besides thee.* If we could take a view of Heaven and Earth at once, we should see no Object to be compared with God. He is the first Good, and therefore the best Good; all Perfections are in God; all superlative Excellencies are in him; he is a sole Good; *Lam. iii. 24. The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul; I will hope in his Mercy.* He is a Soul-satisfying Good; *Psal. xvii. 15. As for me, I will behold thy Face in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy Likeness.* The Reason why we are not satisfied with the Enjoyment of God here, is because we have not the immediate and full Enjoyment of him: When we come to see him Face to Face, we shall desire no more, nor desire no better.

Fourthly, You have the most ample Provision in respect of Means, and a Blessing promised in the use of them.

1. The most ample Provision in respect of Means. You have all the Ordinances of God to enjoy, so that you are at the Feast of fat Things, which the Lord hath promised to make to his People, of fat Things full of Marrow, of Wine on the Lees well refined. *Acts. ii. 41, 22. Then they that gladly received the Word, were baptized.* (That Ordinance is but once to be administred, but it is of continual use to oblige the Soul to die to Sin, and to live to Holiness, *Rom. vi. 3, 4.* And also together with Faith to evidence our title to Salvation: *Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*) This you have; and then being added unto the Church, *they continued in the Apostles Doctrine, and breaking of Bread, and Prayer.* They had Fellowship in all these Ordinances, you have all this Provision.

2. You have a Blessing promised in the use thereof: *Psal. cxxxii. I will abundantly bless her Provision; I will clothe her Priests with Salvation, and her Saints shall sing for joy.*

Fifthly, You shall flourish and be fruitful, even in old Age, when grey Hairs are upon your Heads: *Psal. xcii.*

ult. *The Righteous shall flourish like a Palm-tree, they shall grow like the Cedar in Lebanon. They that are planted in the House of the Lord shall be fat and flourishing, they shall still bring forth Fruit in old Age; to shew that the Lord is upright, and that there is no Unrighteousness in him.*

1. They are planted in a fruitful Stock: The Lord Jesus he is the Vine, and you are the Branches; there is Juice enough in the Vine to render the Branches fruitful, for in him dwells all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily, all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are in him, in him is all the Fulness of communicable Grace; and it is of his fulness that all we receive, and Grace for Grace.

2. They are under the manuring of a skilful Husbandman. *I am the Vine, my Father is the Husbandman; every Branch in me that beareth Fruit, my Father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit, John xv. 2.*

3. They enjoy fruitful Means, they have all the Ordinances of God vouchsafed to them.

4. They have the promise of Blessing in the use of Means: *He will abundantly bless her Provision.*

5. There is the Righteousness of God engaged to make good his Promise: *They shall still bring forth Fruit in old Age, to shew that the Lord is upright, and that there is no Unrighteousness in him.*

C H A P. XIII.

Containing an Exhortation to Disciples to be baptized, and join themselves with an Instituted Church of Christ.

I Would now exhort those who upon an Examination can find that they are Disciples indeed, to submit to the mediatory Authority of the Lord Jesus, to take up the Ordinance of Baptism, and join themselves to an Instituted Church: I say to be baptized, and then to join themselves, for every Thing should be done in its own order. It is
apparent.

apparent that this is the Order of the Gospel, it is the Order of the Commission, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* The Order of Words in the Commission must be observed, first *disciple*, then *baptize*, then *teach* the Observation of all Things whatsoever Christ had commanded: The Apostles never broke this Order, no Instance of any such Thing can be given, but Instances of their observing and keeping close to it may be abundantly given, *Acts ii. 41.* They first disciplined, then baptized, then added unto the Church.

1. Consider you that are disciplined to Christ are meet Matter for both. (1.) For Baptism, *Matt. xxviii. 19. Go disciple all Nations, baptizing them, &c.* (2.) For Communion; *Psal. xxiv. 3. You have clean Hands and a pure Heart*; and therefore you may *ascend into the Hill of God, you may stand in that holy Place.*

2. It is your Duty so to do. This I prove by the Commission; it is your Duty to be baptized, and to join yourselves to an Instituted Church. That both these are enjoined by the Commission appears, in that the Apostles who well understood their Lord's Commission, and kept close to it, did so proceed: They first disciplined, then baptized, then added unto the Church, *Acts ii. 41.*

3. It is your Privilege so to do, there is a great Advantage to be had thereby upon a spiritual Account.

(1.) Baptism is of use to bind from Sin, and to bind to Duty. *Rom. vi. How shall we that are dead to Sin live any longer therein? Know you not that as many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his Death? that even as Christ was raised by the Glory of the Father, we also should walk in Newness of Life.*

(2.) To confirm our Faith in the Remission of Sin, by the Blood of Christ: *Acts ii. 38. Repent and be baptized for the Remission of Sins, &c.* But here Repentance must precede, or else Baptism will not do it.

(3.) To evidence our Right and Title to Salvation together with Faith: *Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*; but separate from Faith, it gives no Evidence at all. But here you will ask me, how Baptism doth evidence our Right and Title to Salvation? I answer, as it is taken up in Obedience to the Will of God,
and

and Faith in the Promise, that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

By the way then observe, where Baptism is not thus taken up in Faith and Obedience, it can be no Evidence to them. Whatever Evidence they have, Baptism is none.

2ly. Church-Communion is a great Privilege. The Fellowship which the Members have one with another is refreshing. Christians can rarely unbosom themselves one to another with that Freedom, as those that are in Communion. *Two are better than one; for if one walk alone, if he fall, there is none to help him up.* But when Christians are in a Church-State, if any of them be overtaken with a Fault, such as are Spiritual are to help them up with a tender Hand, their work is to restore them with a Spirit of Meekness, considering lest they themselves should be tempted.

There are all the Ordinances of Christ to be enjoyed, the most ample Provision, and a Blessing promised in the use thereof; there may the Soul be found in a Capacity to perform the whole of his Duty to God, though not perfectly to perform any Part thereof; there may he take and eat which he cannot do while he stands in a single State; there is a special promised Presence of God; there may the Soul expect more Fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, than while he stands in a single State; because there are more Means and Ways of Communion than elsewhere.

4. It was not the Practice of Disciples in the primitive Times, to stand long in a single State, as now it is, however it comes about to be the Practice now. *Then they that gladly received the Word, were baptized; and that same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.* Wherever the Gospel took Effect, they were soon embodied into a Church-State.

5. Membership in an Instituted Church is a desirable thing: Psal. xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of my Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple.* I cannot think it is less desirable now than it was then; for the Lord dwells in Sion.

Sion still, and there his Glory is still to be beheld. An Instituted Church is a House that Christ hath built, and it is a spiritual House, to be an Habitation of God through the Spirit.

6. It is now a Season to join yourselves, for now have the Churches Rest. How long this Rest may be continued, God only knows; but this we know, there was a Time when *the Churches had Rest, and then they were edified and comforted, and walking in the Fear of the Lord, were multiplied.*

7. Time is both short and uncertain; and therefore it is not safe to delay, lest Opportunity should be gone behind us. *In the Grave who shall praise thee?* If Death comes, there will be an end of Season and Opportunity; therefore take hold of it while you may; the longer you delay to enter into the House of God, the shorter will be your abode there.

But here are some Objections that must be answered.

1. It may be objected by some, *That they have not the Assurance of being discipled to Christ they desire to have, and that makes them to delay.*

(1.) I answer, if you delay till you have that Assurance you desire to have, you may delay till it be too late. I know no Body hath that Assurance he desires to have, nor may it be expected while we remain in a State of Imperfection; while our Graces are imperfect, our Assurance will be imperfect.

(2.) It is not the reflex Act of Faith, but the direct Act, that fits a Person to enjoy the Ordinances of Christ. *If thou believest with all thy Heart, thou mayest.* Now this a Person may do that lies abundantly short in respect of Assurance. Have you accepted Christ on Gospel Terms? Have you made a Resignation of your Soul to Christ, to be taught by him, and saved by him, and governed by him? This is that which fits you for the Enjoyment of Ordinances. Can you call Christ Lord? *Why then do you not the Things that he saith unto you?* Let me ask you one Question, do you pray and read and hear in Obedience to the Will of God? If you do, it is a Sign that your Hearts are changed; *For the carnal Mind is Enmity against God,*
and

and is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. If you can evidence to yourselves that there is a Principle of Obedience to be found in you, you may go on with Comfort.

(3.) One great Reason of your want of Assurance may be your partial Obedience, standing at a Distance from these confirming Ordinances. Baptism and the Supper of the Lord too are confirming Ordinances, the one of our Justification by the Blood of Christ; and to that end *Peter* exhorts them to repent, and be baptized, for the Remission of Sin: The other is of our Interest in all the Promises of the new Covenant, that were sealed by the Blood of Christ, a Symbol of which Blood we have in the Cup in the Supper, which is called the New Testament in his Blood. If we can apply the Blood of Christ by Faith in these Ordinances, then as really as we drink the Cup, so really have we an Interest in all these confirmed Promises of the new Covenant, by that Blood of which the Cup is a Symbol or Sign.

If therefore you can act in Obedience to the Will of God in any thing, act in Obedience to his Will in this also. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all his Commandments*, Psal. cxix. 6. *Ye are my Friends*, saith Christ, *if ye do all Things whatsoever I command you*, John xv. And there is no doubt of it, if it be done as the Lord commands. *If ye love me*, saith Christ, *keep my Commandments*, John xiv.

2. It may be objected by some, *They tremble at these Words, He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Condemnation to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord.*

I answer, (1.) If these be all the Words you tremble at, it is a bad Sign. We should tremble at all the Word; at the Precepts, lest we come short in obeying; at his Promises, lest we come short in applying.

(2.) It is a bad Sign if trembling keep us back from Duty. But to go on in Duty to God, trembling at his Word, lest we come short in obeying or in applying the Promises, is a good Sign. *To this Man will I look*, saith God, *that*

is of a pure and contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at my Word, Isa. lxvi. 2.

2^{ly}. The unworthy Receiver is the unbelieving Receiver: He that looks no farther than the outward Element, but doth not behold a broken and a bleeding Christ that is held out in them, that looks on the Sign but not on the thing signified, that feeds only on Bread and Wine, but doth not feed spiritually by Faith on the Flesh and Blood of a crucified Christ.

3^{ly}. We may not suppose that Damnation is so sealed up to him that hath eaten and drunken unworthily, that there is no reversing of it, or that there is no hope of Salvation for the future; but this is a Truth, Persons do increase their Guilt by it, and such unworthy receiving is that which deserves Damnation, and their Condemnation will be aggravated thereby if they remain impenitent. But we may not look on it to be the unpardonable Sin: Therefore I would exhort all that do truly fear God, that do tremble at his Word, lest they should come short in obeying, in believing, in applying the Promises, in hearkening to and following the Council of Christ, to lay by all these Objections, and to go on in their Duty; and if they can act in Obedience to the Will of God, the Lord will be with them. Matt. xxviii. 20. *Lo, I am with you always to the End of the World, Amen:* Not only with them that teach Obedience to the Will of God in all Things, but with them also that learn in all Things to obey? Matt. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the Midst of them.*

C H A P. XIV.

Containing an Exhortation to Churches to endeavour to preserve and maintain Peace in each particular Congregation.

IN the last Place I would exhort the Churches of Christ, and each particular Congregation, to be careful and endeavour

endeavour to preserve Peace in the Church, to be at peace among themselves. I would press the Exhortation with a few moving Considerations.

1. Consider that the Effects of the Breach of Peace are very sad. One Effect is, a deal of Sin is ordinarily committed thereby; and can there be a sadder Effect? Differences do raise Heats, Heart burnings one against another. *James* tells us, *Where Envy and Strife is, (and it is often found that these are Twins) there is Confusion, and every evil Work.* It doth commonly beget a Multitude of Words, in which *Solomon* tells us, *there wanteth not Sin,* Prov. x. 19. It is ordinary when Differences do arise in a Church, to make Parties in the Case on each side. And when Churches are split into Parties, it is bad; for then much of their Time is spent in such Discourses as come to nothing. And when they meet to debate their Differences, they break out into Heats, and reflect one upon another, and every thing is taken in the worst Sense; and Breaches are rather widened than healed, and these Parties are too often puffed up one against another: We know it was so in the Church of *Corinth.* And we are too much pleased with the Miscarriages one of another, and will be sure to keep a Register of them, that so they may be capable to defame each other; and at last it may be so, that it will issue in a Separation, to the Grief of those that are Sincere, the Joy of the Wicked; and the Discouragement of those that were beginning to look Heaven-ward. I doubt not but woful Experience doth contribute evidence enough to these sad Effects of the Breach of Peace in Churches.

2. It is your Duty to endeavour the Preservation of Peace while you have it, and to seek after it when it is gone.

(1.) To preserve it while you have it: Mark ix. 50. *Have Salt in your selves, and be at Peace one with another.* Rom. xiv. 9. *Let us follow after the Things that make for Peace, and Things whereby one may edify another.* 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *Live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.* I shall add but one Text more of the many that do press this Duty; Eph. iv. 3. *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

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(2.) It is our Duty to endeavour the Recovery of it when it is gone, oristaking it's flight from us: 1 Pet. iii. 11. *Seek Peace, and ensue it.* This is an Exhortation to a proper Expedient in order to the seeing of good Days, as you may see by the preceding Verse. If Peace should seem to fly from us, we should after it, and if possible overtake it, and recover it again. Go with Terms of Peace along with you; condescend as far as you can, deny yourselves in what you may to purchase Peace: The Rule is, *If it be possible, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all Men,* Rom. xii. 18. Go as far as possibly you can. And methinks it should be possible to live so in an Instituted Church, where Persons professes to walk by rule; Psal. xxxiv. 14. *Seek Peace and ensue it;* be unwearied in the pursuit of it, give not over till you have overtaken it.

3. Consider, it is a blessed thing to be a Peace-maker, Mat. v. 9. *Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.* They resemble their heavenly Father, for he is a God of Peace. If the People of God among whom Differences arise, did study this Text more, and were careful that this Character might appear in them, how soon would Differences be made up; if all were for Peace, who could carry on the War?

4. Consider, Peace in Churches is a desirable thing. How earnestly did the Apostle pray for it? 2 Thes. iii. 2. *Now the Lord himself give you Peace always, by all Means.* If inward and spiritual Peace be mainly intended here, I do not think the other is excluded, but rather comprehended: For it is a great Duty to pray for the Peace of Jerusalem; Psal. cxxxii. 6, 7. *Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, Peace be within thy Walls.*

5. Consider, if Churches do live in Peace, it is a good Expedient in order to the Enjoyment of the God of Peace. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *Finally, my Brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of one Mind, be at Peace, and the God of Peace shall be with you.*

6. It is a very lovely and pleasant Sight to behold Churches in Peace. *Behold, how pleasant and joyful a Thing it is for Brethren to live together in Unity! It is like the precious Ointment that was poured on the Head of Aaron, that ran*

down

down to his Beard, and from thence to the Skirts of his Garments. Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

7. Consider, Church-Members are Brethren, there is a spiritual Brotherhood as well as a natural one; they are called *Saints and faithful Brethren*. Col. i. 2. The Church that were at *Antioch* were called *Brethren*. Acts xv. 1. This should be a Motive to enforce our endeavour after Peace. This was the Argument *Moses* used, when he found two *Israelites* striving together, *Sirs, why do you wrong one to another? ye are Brethren*. This was the Argument *Abraham* used to procure and maintain Peace, when there had been a Breach between *Lot's* Herds-men and his: Gen. xiii. 8. *And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no Strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, and between thy Herds-men and mine; for we are Brethren*.

8. That God whom we serve, and whose Church we profess ourselves to be, is the God of Peace; and so he is stiled in the Word; 1 *Thess.* v. 13: he is called *the very God of Peace*.

(1.) He is the God of Peace, in that he is at Peace with his People; they have Peace with him through Christ, *Rom.* v. 1. *Therefore being justified by Faith* (that is, by Christ, Faith being taken objectively for the Word, therefore is relative to the last Verse of the preceding Chapter) *we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made Peace through the Blood of his Cross*.

(2.) He is the God of Peace, in that it is he that gives us inward and spiritual Peace, to enjoy that Peace so often prayed for in *Paul's* Epistles, particularly, *Rom.* xv. 13. *Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing*. It is he that gives that Peace that passeth Understanding.

(3.) He is the God of Peace, as he enjoins you to be at Peace among yourselves, as he gives Rules for the obtaining and preserving of Peace.

(4.) He is the God of Peace, in that he is the Author of Peace: 1 *Cor.* xiv. 33. *For God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace as in all Churches of the Saints*.

9. Consider, Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, that

is his Name; Isa. ix. 6. *The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

(1.) He is our Peace, as having made Peace. *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself.* Peace and Reconciliation are the same thing, Eph. ii. 14. This was the greatest and the most lasting Peace that ever was made, that none but Christ could make, because none but Christ could satisfy offended Justice.

(2.) It was a costly Peace, he made Peace through the Blood of his Cross; it cost him his Blood, his Life Blood, in the shedding of which there was a bearing the Curse: for the Death of the Cross was an accursed Death.

3) He is the Prince of Peace, in that he hath proclaimed it, and that as soon as ever it was made; he came and preached Peace to them that were nigh, and to them that were far off. Eph. ii. 17. He did commit this Word of Reconciliation unto his Apostles, that they might go and publish and proclaim it. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

10 Consider, the Gospel that you profess, is the Gospel of Peace: We are exhorted to *have our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace.* Eph. vi. 15. It is by the Gospel we have the glad Tidings of that Peace that Christ hath made: It is the Gospel that is the Means by which we are won over to accept of that Peace that Christ hath purchased; it is the Gospel that is the Means of Spiritual Peace.

11. Consider, it is your aim to enter into Peace when you go hence and be seen no more, that you may live eternally in the Enjoyment of that Peace which Christ hath purchased. Now if Peace be so desirable hereafter, why should it not be endeavoured after here? I shall now offer a few Words of Advice to such as are willing to promote Peace in the Church, what to beware of, what to do, and how to do,

1. We should be careful to avoid Miscarriages in our Conversation, every thing that may justly be offensive to our Brethren. Ordinarily the Breach of Peace in Churches comes by the Miscarriage of some Member or Members; though I confess an Offence may be taken, when there is none justly given; but our Care should be that we give

none.

none. Give no Offence to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God. We should be Followers of that blessed Apottle in this, who did exercise himself to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man. In particular, we should be careful of personal Wrongs to our Brethren in our Dealing; we should rather suffer wrong than do wrong.

2. We should be careful we do not take Offence upon every light Occasion. Some Persons are so touchy, that a small Matter offends them, and a little Spark kindles a great Fire. If we make a Man an offender for a Word that is not pleasant to us, we are not like to maintain Peace any long time: There must be bearing and forbearing, if we would preserve Peace; that is, we must bear and forbear, where we may so do it, and keep our selves free from Sin.

3. We must beware and carefully avoid Passion in all our Debates of Things. That unruly Corruption hath oft-times a great hand in the Breach of Peace. It is one of the great Make-baits in Churches. It is rare that Passion doth issue any thing of a Controversy, but oft-times Debates are issued in Passion, Men fall into a Heat and so break off their Debates, without issuing any thing; and the Breach was not so wide before, but it is now made much wider; and by the indigested Words that are hastily spoken, Advantage is taken to encrease the Difference. Solomon was noted for a Man of great Wisdom, and he was likewise a Man of great Experience, and one that was inspired by the Spirit of God: He tells us, that a soft Answer turn away Wrath, and grievous Words stir up Anger. This then is not the way to make Peace: We should still remember that the Wrath of Man doth not accomplish the Righteousness of God.

4. We should be careful to keep down Spiritual Pride, that we be not proud of Parts and Gifts, no nor yet of Graces; that we do not look on our selves as taller by the Head and Shoulders than our Brethren, and so expect that every bodies Sheaf should make obeysance unto ours. Solomon tells us, that only by Pride cometh Contention. Prov. xiii. 10. As if there were no other moving Cause, or rather

ther that this is all that Pride is good for, to breed Quarrels and Debates. But saith he, *with the well-advised is Wisdom.* So that proud Persons are not the only Men of Wisdom in the World, whatever they may think of themselves; therefore we had need be careful that we be not wise in our own Conceit: Prov. xxvi. 12. *Seest thou a Man wise in his own Conceit? There is more hope of a Fool than of him.* Such a one thinks much to be opposed, and scorns to be reprov'd.

5. We should endeavour to live a mortified Life, not only to keep down Pride and Passion, but to subdue and keep under every Corruption: Keep up and maintain a Spiritual Warfare within, and that will be a Means to prevent a carnal Warfare without. James iv. 1. *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Are they not from hence, even from your Lusts that war in your Members?* Whence came those Divisions that were among the Corinthians, but from the Carnality of their Spirits? 1 Cor. iii. 3. *Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there are among you Envyings, Strifes and Divisions, are ye not carnal?* And so he goes on to charge them with their Carnality, as being the cause, that one was of Paul, another of Apollos. Men differ about Matters of Religion, but many Times their own Irreligion hath the greatest hand in their Differences.

6. We should endeavour to keep up Love one towards another, and walk in Love if we would walk in Peace; Eph. iv. 2. *Forbearing one another in Love, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* There are such excellent Properties in Love, that it would contribute much to Peace. 1 Cor. xiii. You have the Properties of Charity, which is Love; *It suffereth long, and is kind.* This one Property put forth, would contribute much to Peace; but where this is wanting, Persons will suffer nothing for Peace sake. *Charity envieth not, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, beareth all Things, endureth all Things, &c.* This would prevent Heats among Brethren, could they walk in Love, in Charity one towards another. Charity doth not swell and puff up a Man like a Bladder; but keeps him meek and lowly, and would in a great Measure prevent the doing of Things through

through Strife or vain Glory: but such is the Carriage of Brethren one towards another sometimes when Differences arise in Churches, that one would almost wonder what is become of Charity.

7. If Persons would preserve Peace in the Church, they should speedily seek a Reconciliation, where Things are done that tend to the Breach of Peace, and he that hath given the Offence should make a free and ingenuous Acknowledgment of it. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy Gift before the Altar: Firſt go and be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

8. If Peace be in danger to be broken, ſloop as low as poſſible to prevent it; if praying and entreating will prevent it, do not ſtick at that. *I pray thee (ſaith Abraham to Lot) let there be no Strife between me and thee, nor between thy Herds-men and my Herds-men.* Do not think this to be beneath you, though it be to an Inferior? Lot was inferior to Abraham, for Abraham was his Uncle, yet he ſticks not at that. We ſhould ſloop ſo low as to forego ſome outward Advantage for Peace ſake. *The Land is before us,* ſaith he, *If thou wilt go to the right-Hand, I will go to the left; If thou wilt go to the left Hand, I will go to the right.* He gives him his Choice, and all for the ſake of Peace. A ſelf-denying Frame of Spirit, contributes much to the Preſervation of Peace. To conclude then, *Follow after Peace: And for your Encouragement, feed on that Promise, Live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace ſhall be with you.*



F I N I S.

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*I*T is not certain how many Times the foregoing excellent Treatise has been carried through the Press. It should seem that it was first published by the Author himself; then, many Years afterwards by Mr. J. Noble, who is long since deceased. Whether his was the second, third, or fourth Edition, the Title-Page does not express, nor is it easy to say; it has, however been long out of Print, which induced the Editor to present the Public with this new Edition, printed verbatim from a Copy of that published by Mr. Noble.

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